







THE TRUE STORY OF GEORGE ELIOT "It is too possible that to some of my readers Methodism may mean nothing more than lowpitched gables up dingy streets, sleek grocers, sponging preachers and hypocritical jargon elements, which are regarded as an exhaustive analysis of Methodism in many fashionable quarters.

"That would be a pity; for I cannot pretend that Seth and Dinah were anything else but Methodists, not indeed of that modern type which reads quarterly reviews and attends in chapels with pillared porticoes; but of a very old-fashioned kind. They believed in present miracles, in instantaneous conversions, in revelations by dreams and visions; they drew lots, and sought for Divine guidance by opening the Bible at hazard; having a literal way of interpreting the Scriptures, which is not at all sanctioned by approved commentators; and it is impossible for me to represent their diction as correct, or their instruction as liberal. Still-if I have read religious history aright-faith, hope and charity have not always been found in a direct ratio with a sensibility to the three concords; and it is possible, thank Heaven ! to have very erroneous theories and very sublime feelings."

> GEORGE ELIOT in Adam Bede, Chapter III.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



THE TRUE STORY

OF

GEORGE ELIOT

IN RELATION TO "ADAM BEDE," GIVING THE REAL LIFE HISTORY OF THE MORE PROMINENT CHARACTERS

BY

WILLIAM MOTTRAM

(Grand Nephew of Adam and Seth Bede and Cousin to the Author)

WITH EIGHTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

Mainly from Photographs by Allan P. Mottram, B.Sc., and Vernon H. Mottram, B.A.





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DEDICATION

To the fond mother through whom six sons and three daughters shared direct descent from Thias and Lisbeth Bede; and held near kinship with Adam Bede, Seth Bede, and George Eliot—in grateful memory of her self-sacrificing love to us all, of her prayers for us as children, her life-long service of husband, home and family, and of her holy life and beautiful death in association with the church she loved so well from youth to old age—this volume is affectionately inscribed by one who more and more feels that though his mother may be dead to all the world, she is never dead to him.

161581



In the pages of a written book, he who writes and they who read are brought into intellectual companionship for the time being. I deem it, therefore, desirable that the reader should be taken into the writer's confidence as to the inception and growth of his book, and this is what I propose to do in the preface I am now writing.

Many years ago, on one of my visits to the farmhouse in Staffordshire, where my mother was still living in the dear old home, she startled me by asking : "William, have you read my cousin's book?" "What book, mother?" said I in return, to which she replied "Adam Bede." I had to confess that though I had heard of the book I had not read it. In truth, my own busy life in the west, as pastor of a church and Temperance reformer, left me but little time for miscellaneous reading. Moreover, I think I should have accorded in feeling with that saying of George Eliot, which declares : "For my own spiritual good I need all other sort of reading, more than I need fiction." Nevertheless, learning from the lips of my mother that the prototype of Adam Bede was my mother's uncle Robert, and that Seth Bede represented her uncle Samuel, while the real Dinah Morris was none other

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than the aunt whose praises I had heard from my mother's lips hundreds of times, naturally I made haste to possess and read the volume.

Partly to please my mother, and partly to gratify my own desires, I began to visit several of her relations in Ashbourne, Wirksworth, Nottingham, Sheffield and Warwickshire, and was kindly received in the home of the authoress herself. I also collected all the facts I could discover relating to the real life of members of the Bede family, and gathered multitudes of books and papers which in any way concerned their history. I had no intention of using my material for any public purpose, further than to entertain a drawing room party, or to instruct the young people of my own charge. In the autumn of 1887 I was called to the metropolis as described on page 30 of this volume. The church there referred to was situated in Borough Road, Southwark, and the Lambeth Baths mission, which attracted five thousand attendances every week. was held in a huge swimming bath, situated in a street usually designated the New Cut. I was pastor of the church and superintendent of the mission. The meetings of the latter commenced each October and closed in the following April, the bath only being required for swimming during the summer months. Nowhere in the metropolis could there be found more povertystricken districts than West Southwark and North Lambeth. The needs of the people pressed on me as a nightmare. My lecture, entitled : "An Evening with Adam Bede " was an expedient to raise funds for their relief. Never can I forget the joy it brought to my heart to be able thus to help my suffering fellowcreatures. Success was immediate, and it continued as long as I was able to carry on the mission. Relief dis-

tribution is a difficult and perplexing business. I fear my administration was not scientific. Discrimination is difficult in dealing with a crowd. In presence of semi-starvation, accentuated one dismal winter by long continued frost and snow, the laws of political economy stand at a discount. In such circumstances, you make no account whether the applicant be Protestant or Catholic, Churchman or Dissenter, Conservative, Radical. or Socialist. When a fellow-creature stands before you hungry and cold, you cannot refuse help though you may be conscious that the recipient has been free with the Decalogue, or has brought on his starvation by the love of strong drink. It is an exquisite delight to me now to remember those past nine years of service, and to think of the part Dinah Morris had with me in this beneficent administration among the sick, the workless multitude, the widows and the children. Dinah's prototype was always caring for the poor. The soul of my lecture was the real Dinah, and I have ever felt that to minister to the needy that saintly woman would be willing to walk the earth once more. Since I gave up my London mission the lecture has been delivered in many parts of the country as well as in the metropolitan area. On one of these occasions a valued friend heard it and at once importuned me to write a series of articles based upon the lecture for insertion in the Leisure Hour. These began to appear in November, 1902. Since their publication I have been urged, in requests from all points of the compass, to collect the magazine articles and publish them in a separate volume. They consisted of twelve chapters dealing with the real life story of Adam Bede, Seth Bede, Mrs. Poyser and Dinah Morris. To the Leisure Hour articles four new chapters are now

added, dealing with matters relating to George Eliot herself. Notwithstanding the floods of luminous biography on the life of this great woman something further needs to be said.

Especially is this true with regard to her marriage with Mr. George H. Lewes. On the subject of this union there is much misunderstanding, and there are many exaggerated judgments. Admirers of her works are confronted with harsh indictments as to the errors of her life. They are even adjured, while enjoying her fiction, to bewail her dangerous lapses from ways of purity and righteousness. While profiting by her ethics they are warned to loathe her example. All this is entirely due to her alliance with Mr. Lewes. Apart from this union George Eliot's life was not only blameless but beneficent in a high degree, and her character is entirely stainless. A plain statement of the simple facts of her first marriage is now fully due. With my strong conviction of her position as a great ethical and spiritual force in the world, I cannot but feel how desirable it is that her conduct should be set in the clearest light possible. From George Eliot's own moral standpoint her life needs no vindication, it vindicates itself. On the morality of George Eliot's union with Mr. Lewes opinions may differ, even as our moral standards vary. On every conceivable ground, however, it is better that the specific facts should be set forth, so that each reader may have a reliable basis whereon to ground his judgment. The admirers and students of George Eliot are to be counted by the million. They are in all the walks of life from the loftiest to the lowliest. It is my earnest desire that the materials for a true verdict should be placed within reach of all those who

may wish to consider them. This is what I have attempted to do in Chapter XV., and I hope that neither the sacred memory of George Eliot nor the interests of her readers will suffer in consequence. I have written under the compelling influence of duty, with the feeling that I could do no other.

I have written nothing on the painful episode relating to Arthur Donnithorne and Hetty Sorrel because, other than the tragic case of Mary Voce, so totally dissimilar, I know of nothing in real life that corresponds to this part of our author's fiction. So far as I know, with any clear perception, this portion of Adam Bede is a creation of the novelist for purposes of literary art, and is probably the most artificial part of her story.

The pictures in this volume are mostly reproductions of photographs taken by my sons, a few are from other sources, permission having been sought where copyright was concerned.

Such as it is, my reader, this book awaits your kind and indulgent perusal. It claims no literary pretensions, and is, doubtless, laden with many imperfections. It comes, however, with the writer's honest desire to interest you in its contents and to communicate to you some of the good he has found in compiling the volume.

In the delivery of my lecture, as well as in the preparation of the book founded upon it, the contemplation of the several characters in their own native reality, as collated with their presentment in fiction, has been a spiritual blessing marvellously enriching my own inner life. Especially is this the case with that truly remarkable woman—Dinah Morris. I would that I could impart some of that rich blessing to all these

who do me the honour of reading what I have written. Well will it be for you, dear reader, and for me, if we may be enabled to serve our generation as well and faithfully as Adam Bede and Mrs. Poyser, Seth Bede and Dinah Morris—and I will add George Eliot served theirs.

WILLIAM MOTTRAM.

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GEORGF ELIOT'S BIRTHPLACE; SOUTH FARM, ARBURY, NUNEATON.



THE

TRUE STORY OF GEORGE ELIOT

CHAPTER I

THE EVOLUTION OF GEORGE ELIOT

"Without a genius learning soars in vain; And without learning genius sinks again; Their force united crowns the sprightly reign."

ELPHINSTON.

LET us think a moment about the name George Eliot. As we write them there is music in the words. They bring to our thought a series of volumes which are crammed full of wisdom, richly laden with philosophy, brimming over with humour, melting in tender pathos, lighted up with fine characters, bristling with dramatic incidents, and each with its message to the world. The name is most familiar. It has come to be, indeed, a part of the mental furniture of mankind and stirs grateful emotion in many climes. This familiar name has a touch of romance in it. The husband's Christian name was George. He was, to her, ever the most delightful companion, the most cherished friend. That was enough. The devotion of the lover settled the first member of the author's nom de plume. Caprice of will decided the other. Thus the name George Eliot

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is merely an author's chosen *alias*, and nothing more. Simple as it is, it represents an amazing reality, and stands for a world-wide inheritance of intellectual power.

George Eliot is a prodigy; there is no better word for it. She is, indeed, if one may use another term, a commanding phenomenon, as well as a prodigy. For, consider the facts. Philosophy, literature, criticism, have been far enough removed from any of her kith and kin, heretofore. Her forbears had no pretensions to science or art. They were respectable country folk, and nothing more. Their education was slight, their intellectual equipment meagre, their literary ambitions nil. Honest and self-respecting tradesmen or farmers, or both, freeholders of their country, above want, but with no superfluity of money; they were contented with their lot, doing their daily duty with faithfulness, making no figure in a public way, nor desiring to do so. Such was the family from which George Eliot sprang. True, her father was, in his way, a remarkable man. A stalwart, of giant strength, self-reliant, energetic and practical. Had he continued in life as a builder he would have distinguished himself in that capacity. He did afterwards win wide distinctions as an estate agent and steward. But of literary pretensions, he had none. I have seen letters which he wrote in his later years of leisured ease, and I am sure the atrocious spelling would have shocked his old schoolmaster. Bartle Massev. The home of the author's youth was a fine old farm house. a scene of ceaseless industry, the mother just as busy indoors as the father in his office and on his farm. Two admirable characters and worthy citizens were they, but neither of them in the least degree likely to

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be the parent of this exceptional woman. Miss Betham Edwards, who knew her well, writes of her as "a sovereign nature" and "an august intellect." There was in the family of George Eliot's father a dim uncertain tradition of a superior position in earlier generations. How often did I hear from her aunt, who was my grandmother, of a family of some wealth,



THE DAME'S SCHOOL, GRIFF. GEORGE ELIOT'S FIRST SCHOOL.

bearing the Welsh name of Evans, who formerly resided in the county of Flint, of four brothers, members of this family, who lived in troublous times, left their ancestral home and somehow came to be tradesmen and farmers in a remote part of Derbyshire. There is also a Northop Hall, in Flintshire, with traditions of such a family. But though the heads of this house bore the honours of knighthood, even they have left

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us no memorials in literature, science or art, and are all but forgotten now. Some of their descendants have become wealthy manufacturers or builders, some of them have been bankers, some professional men or clergymen, some members of Parliament, but among them all there is only one who has manifested the subtle power of genius, and that one is George Eliot.

"Time, place and action may with pain be wrought, But genius must be born and never can be taught."

A genius is a rare thing, and appears among men according to no known law. "The proportion of genius to vulgar," says Lavater, "is like one to a million; but genius without tyranny, without pretension, is like one to ten millions." This rare thing, wherever it is given is of greatest price. Saints and geniuses are always rare.

> "A genius can't be forced, nor can You make an ape an alderman."

In this respect, as in others, the wind bloweth where it listeth. George Eliot was undoubtedly a genius born. She stood, with a few others, on her Olympian height but, in very deed, almost alone. There have not been many Shakespeares, not many Bacons, not many Miltons or Carlyles, and, in truth, there is but one George Eliot. The possession of rare intellectual powers was early discovered in the child. True, it has been said of her that there was nothing extraordinary about her in her first school days. She was not at that time, we are told, an infant prodigy. But let us ask what sort of a school was the first that was open to her? It was a poor old-fashioned dame school, in a low cottage just outside Griff gates, and at five years of age she left it to go to a boarding school. Poor little

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child! I can but pity her. She recollected shivering in the cold rooms. How well I remember similar experiences at school. In the first half of the last century there was a sore lack of humane consideration for the physical comfort of children in schools. George Eliot believed that her suffering from a chill atmosphere at



GEORGE ELIOT'S SECOND SCHOOL, NUNEATON.

school was the beginning of a low state of health which haunted her through life. She also suffered from a keen susceptibility to terror at night, which I can very well believe, because I had to suffer in the same way. The dread of the supernatural was always with us. Her father believed in apparitions, she tells us. Ghost stories, mostly founded on tragedies, were part of the common dread and the common belief. Many a chill

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winter night have I lain in the darkness with terrors of unreal things haunting me, because of recitals I had to hear at our own fireside. Everyone who came as a neighbour seemed to have his own ghost-story, and some of those I used to hear were told by relations of George Eliot.

Until she was eight or nine she remained at the Attleboro boarding school, not always getting to her much loved home, even for the week ends. Alas for the diffident, shrinking child of eight or nine, under such circumstances. The children of genius do not always have an easy time of it prior to their development, and so it was with George Eliot. As early as this the father had become very proud of the astonishing and growing intelligence of his young daughter. At nine she comes under a teacher at Nuneaton, whose influence was life-long. This was Miss Lewis, who was a tutor in the school of a Miss Wallington. I have met persons who were taught along with George Eliot in this academy. Here she learned with the greatest facility. The impression one gathers of her in these early days. up to twelve years of age, is that of an old-fashioned child, spoken of by her schoolmates at Attleboro, who were much older than herself, as "the little mother," and regarded by the whole circle at home as by no means an ordinary girl. At the age of twelve she was sent to a boarding school in Coventry. Here she came in contact with two remarkable women, the Misses Franklin, the daughters of a Baptist minister, who kept a school for young ladies. The fact that she was sent to this establishment is proof to me that in the father's thought she had established herself as one who should have the best education which he could Here, as is proper for a genius, she was alsupply.

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ways in the first rank, and became a chief favourite among the pupils. Here also, her school-fellows always felt that she was immeasurably their superior. She was the show-girl of the academy, which, with her extreme sensitiveness, occasioned her a good deal of mental suffering. The five years spent in the school of the Misses Franklin were happy, formative years,



INTERIOR OF GEORGE ELIOT'S SCHOOL, NUNEATON.

which left blessed memories on the heart of George Eliot, and came to be reproduced in one of her novels. School finished, her self-education began. As a matter of course she had now to take her place as a daughter in the home.

There is every evidence that she accepted her new position and her home duties with submission and alacrity. She took her share of the farm-house toil

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and acquitted herself with becoming industry and devotion. The mother was one of the best of housewives, but by this time her health had become extremely feeble and George Eliot had to take no slight share in house-The mother dies when her youngest hold work. daughter is sixteen years old. A year later the next elder sister marries, and she has full charge of the establishment. She is housekeeper at Griff and dairywoman as well. Here was sufficient to tax the energies of any person, but George Eliot found time for other things. All the while she was rapidly advancing her own education. She had learned professors coming over from Coventry week by week, from whom she took lessons in German, Spanish, Italian, and music. She taught herself Greek, made some incursions into Hebrew, and engaged in serious studies in literature. Her thirst for knowledge was insatiable and her delight in study unbounded. Then followed eight years of residence in a suburb of Coventry as house-keeper to her father. Here, as never before, the gates of knowledge opened before her. She found new intellectual companionships and advanced into the wide realms of thought. It was here she commenced her literary career. At the beginning of this period she was twentyone years old and at its close, with the death of her father in 1849, she was a woman of twenty-nine. After a brief residence abroad we find her settling in London. She resided with the family of Dr. Chapman in the Strand. He was editor in chief of the Westminster Review, and she his assistant editor. She has now entered on her career as one of the foremost literary women of her time. We next turn to a consideration of the real life story of some of her characters in the family novel of Adam Bede.

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COPY OF THE ENTRY OF THE MARRIAGE OF ROBERT EVANS (ADAM BEDE) AND HARRIET POYNTON, IN THE REGISTER OF ELLASTONE (HAYSLOPE) CHURCH.



CHAPTER II

THE HOME OF THE BEDES A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

"O, my beloved Nymph, fair Dove, Princess of rivers, how I love Upon thy flowery banks to lie, And view thy silvery stream, When gilded by a summer beam, And in it all thy wanton joy, Playing at liberty."—CHARLES COTTON.

Nor more than three miles from Buxton there stands a rugged mountain height called Axe Edge. It rises to an altitude of nearly two thousand feet, occupies a portion of three counties, and pours out from its flinty sides four pellucid rivers. One of these is the winding, rapid stream on whose flowery banks Charles Cotton loved to lie in the summer sunshine, on which he built his picturesque fishing house now standing at Beresford Dale, near Hartington, and where he and his friend Izaak Walton, the famous classical angler, held high converse as fishermen more than two hundred years ago. The river Dove is indeed supremely fair, and the scenery on its banks is romantic and inspiring.

Dovedale, extending for three miles on its course of forty-five miles, is a deep, rocky, limestone gorge; through which the Dove swiftly flows, falling over pleasant cascades. Issuing from the confines of Dovedale, the river flows through rich alluvial pastures and by fruitful dairy farms. Along its banks the trains of

the Ashbourne branch of the North Staffordshire Railway smoothly glide, to reach the Churnet Valley line at Rocester Junction. The second station *en route* is Norbury. During its whole course the Dove divides the two counties of Derby and Stafford, and Norbury is on the Derbyshire side of the stream.



ENTRANCE TO DOVEDALE (THE EAGLEDALE OF ADAM BEDE) SHOWING THORPE CLOUD ON THE RIGHT.

The parish has never had more than four hundred inhabitants, and the greater portion have always resided in the hamlet of Roston and in the straggling district called Roston Common. Standing on a low ridge above the rail and the river is the parish church, concerning which the well-known antiquary, Mr. J. C. Cox, says: "The church of St. Mary is of peculiar and exceptional interest. It consists of a chancel, nave, north aisle, and tower between two chapels on the south side of the nave. The chief glory of this church is its old stained and painted glass. 'There are not six parish churches in England that have so extensive a display.'' Directly in front of the church are the simple memorials in stone of several of the persons who will be mentioned in this history. How calm and peaceful is the scene—

> "But let me lie in a quiet spot, With the green turf o'er my head, Far from the city's busy hum, The worldling's heavy tread."

Close by the churchyard is an ancient manor-house, formerly the residence of the FitzHerberts of Swinnerton. Our concern with it is that a hundred years ago it was occupied by a farmer of the name of Maskery, and you will find that name given in Adam Bede. A rising slope leads us to Roston Common. By the wayside is a disused schoolroom, which is said to occupy the site of a former school wherein Bartle Massev was the school-master a hundred years ago. This is a name familiar to the reader of Adam Bede. Let him not imagine that it is a name of mere fiction. The person it represents was real enough to several generations of schoolboys and girls in the parish of Norbury, several of whom, to my knowledge, retained a vivid recollection of the tough hazel wielded by the veritable Bartle Massey.

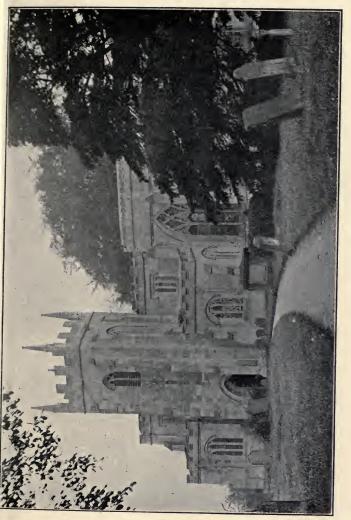
A short distance in the same direction brings us to Roston Common, where there is a lonely house, standing on the left-hand side of the road, divided now into two comfortable cottages. At the time treated of in *Adam Bede* these formed one dwelling,

which, together with a garden and orchard, the workshop at the south end and eight acres of meadow and pasture land, were the property of one George Evans, who resided there with his wife Mary and their family of five sons and three daughters. One might wonder how a family with a name so distinctively Welsh should in those days be found in this remote part of Derbyshire. It has been discovered by one Lieutenant-Colonel Evans, a member of the Roston family, descended from the brother of George Evans, that three centuries ago there was a "Thomas Evans de Northop, in the County of Flint, Argent"; and that from this ancient Welsh knight these later Evanses The Evanses would seem to have dishave sprung. appeared from Flintshire in the first half of the seventeenth century, and towards its close the name occurs in the Norbury register.

In the seventeenth century great national commotions took place. There was the Revolution under Charles I., the Commonwealth under Cromwell, and the Restoration under Charles II. It is manifest that during those troublous times the fortunes of the Evans family had seriously declined, for one of the descendants of the Welsh knight of Northop appears as a humble resident of Norbury, with a significant appellation attached to his name by the clergyman who kept the parish register. Three times over he is described as "Joseph Evans, a *traveller*," and the word traveller as used then was equivalent to our use of the word tramp.

Another hundred years have gone their round, and we come upon another descendant of the ancient knight in the person of the George Evans mentioned previously, who is a freeholder of the county of Derby,

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NORBURY CHURCH AND ANCIENT YEW TREE, Here Robert Evans (Adam Bede) sang in the village choir.



and an honest and respectable tradesman. The ownership of the small estate which was his a hundred years ago, has descended in the line of his family, an esteemed lady, his great-granddaughter, being the proprietor now. In his lifetime, the rural home was a scene of busy, strenuous toil. Although lonely and remote there were situated around it, at varying dis-



ANCIENT MANOR HOUSE, NORBURY; HOME OF THE MASKERY FAMILY.

tances, a number of farm-houses and cottages, and it was within reach of villages and hamlets, where the useful handicraft of the father and his sons was in constant requisition.

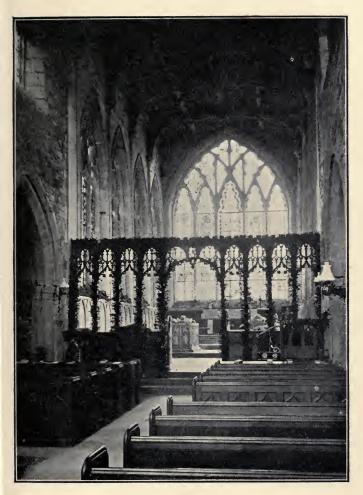
George Evans was the carpenter and builder for the

whole locality. His "brow was wet with honest sweat," while his good wife, Mary, was a woman of household thrift and motherly activity. Every one of the five sons was taught his father's trade after passing the scant curriculum of Bartle Massey's school. The demands of labour were constant and severe. The eight hours' days of toil was not even dreamed of as yet. In the summer time eighteen hours would be nearer the mark. There was, however, one blessed safeguard, the Sunday was in reality a day of rest.

In these restless times people weary themselves on Sundays in pursuing their pleasures. It was not so then. For all classes of toilers the Sunday meant Sabbath rest in reality. In the forenoon the family of George Evans invariably went to church. Then followed at mid-day that important event, the Sunday dinner. It was the repast of the week. The father always laid great stress on the Sunday dinner. This cheerful function ended, the whole of the Sunday afternoon was spent in a family Sunday school, long before Sunday schools had been instituted in that neighbourhood. The boys and girls, instructed by the father, practised reading and writing, spelling and ciphering, and they were catechised on their school work, and encouraged in the way of simple elementary learning, and so the Sabbath wore on and was really a delight to all the family.

> "We thank Thee, Lord, for one day To look Heaven in the face; The poor have only Sunday; The sweeter is the grace.
> 'Tis then they make the music That sings their week away;
> O, there's a sweetness infinite In the workman's Sabbath day.''

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NORBURY CHURCH: INTERIOR.



Hard toil on week-days, sweet rest on Sundays, a family life wholesome, if not refined, a home where the parents exhibited to their children an example of reverence, integrity, uprightness and industry, and where the children grew up healthy, self-respecting, honest and virtuous, worthy citizens, honourable men



BIRTHPLACE OF ROBERT EVANS (ADAM BEDE.) ". . . he entered the house and glanzed into the room on the left-hand which was used as a workshop." Adam Bede, Chap. iv.

and women. Such was the family of George and Mary Evans, and it is family life like this which constitutes the stamina and builds up the strength of a puissant and progressive nation.

In turn, every one of the boys was taken from school at a too early age, to be inducted into the mysteries of the father's handicraft. There was no scruple then

in putting lads to work in their tender years. It had always been so. There were no Elementary Education Acts to restrain the father's liberty for the children's good; no set number of standards in the three R's to be got over, and no fixed age to be attained before a boy could be employed in labour, as is the case now. There were, however, plenty of fresh air, an abundance of homely, substantial food, and the care and love of devoted parents.

Less than half a mile away was the school of Bartle Massey. One of the earliest names I remember to have heard outside the circle of our own family names. is that of Bartle Massey. Yet how far the picture of the quaint old man drawn for us in Adam Bede is true to life, or how far it is meant to be so, I cannot say. The recollections I have of the statements made to me concerning him are that he was universally regarded as a clever schoolmaster, that he had a great reputation for bringing his pupils forward quickly, that he exercised a severe discipline, had an erratic temper and cherished an impatient contempt for dull scholars, who generally had a poor time with him. Some of his pupils had to walk many miles each day to attend his school, because schools were scarce and his was popular; his school fees were sixpence per week for the tuition of each child, and he usually collected his fees by sending in his bill at Christmas, except in the case cf a few scholars who paid their fees weekly.

The reputation of the schoolmaster extended far and near. The curriculum, though limited, was of practical value. Strict attention was paid to reading and spelling. The reading lessons consisted of such as were contained in various educational compilations of which that very useful, but now obsolete, school-book Mavor's Reading and Spelling Book may be taken as an example, supplemented by that "well of English undefiled," the Authorised Version of the Old and New Testaments. Spelling was inculcated by the committal to memory of long columns of words arranged according to the number of their syllables, without any hint, in most cases, as to what might be their meaning. Pupils in writing had copies set them by the master, or, as they advanced in the art, copies were handed to them for imitation, done in copper-plate. Arithmetic was taught after the manner of Walkinghame's Tutor's Assistant, and included not only the common elementary rules, but vulgar and decimal fractions, square and cube root, duodecimals, mensuration of superfices, and book-keeping. There were only the very feeblest attempts at teaching grammar, geography, or history. I believe it is quite true that Bartle Massey did try to induce his pupils to carry on their studies by means of an evening school, and it is probable that his complainings that so few of his old scholars availed themselves of the advantages he offered them are genuine enough.

Books were few, periodicals unknown, and newspapers very scanty. In Chapter XIX. of Adam Bede there is an inventory of the books the hero of the story had read over and above the volumes used in his scant education. Brief as is the list, I know well that it would far exceed the reading of the great bulk of Adam Bede's compers. Here it is: "The Bible, including the apocryphal books; Poor Richard's Almanack; Taylor's Holy Living and Dying; The Pilgrim's Progress with Bunyan's Life and Holy War; a great deal of Bailey's Dictionary; Valentine and Orson, and part of a History of Babylon, which Bartle Massey had lent him."

Markets and fairs, club-feasts and parish wakes, Christmas time, Easter and Whitsuntide varied the monotony of village life.



GRAVE OF GEORGE AND MARY EVANS (THIAS AND LISBETH BEDE).

Ashbourne was the market town, while Uttoxeter, Derby, Cheadle and Leek were not far off. My own native home lay just across the Weaver Hills, at Waterhouses in the parish of Waterfall, where I was born in 1836.

On my mother and grandmother's side I am a direct descendant of George and Mary Evans, and it is among the Evans' household we must look for several of the characters mentioned in George Eliot's story of Adam Bede. Thus George and Mary Evans may be taken as typical of "Thias" and "Lisbeth Bede"; Robert Evans is undoubtedly the original who suggested Adam Samuel Evans, the youngest son, was cer-Bede. tainly the prototype of Seth Bede. George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) was the daughter of Adam Bede and the granddaughter of Thias and Lisbeth. It will thus occur to the reader that in portraying Adam Bede our author was thinking of her own father, and had the very best reasons for the statement concerning her hero, that he had a dash of Celtic blood in his veins. This statement was literally true. My relation to the Evans family arises from my descent from Ann Evans. the daughter of Thias and Lisbeth, the sister of Adam and Seth-my dearly-beloved grandmother. Thus, it will be seen. I write of things I have known from infancy. The most sacred associations cluster around the story I am about to tell, and the obligation to tell it comes to me bound up with the tenderest family ties-

> "There was a time when I was very small, When my whole frame was but an ell in height. Sweetly, as I recall it, tears will fall, And therefore I recall it with delight."

In those days, so long gone by, I drank in memories of Adam and Seth Bede and Dinah Morris with an avidity I can never forget. Adam Bede and Dinah Morris died when I was thirteen years of age, and Seth Bede died nine years later. Of course, the main facts on which the story was based were known to me long before the book had ever been thought of, even by its author, for they were common family property. My mother and grandmother never wearied of telling me those facts, and it is on them the story is avowedly founded.

My ears never wearied of my mother's recitals concerning her two choice family saints-Seth Bede and Dinah Morris. Concerning the first of these I was told of his conversion to God as a very young man, his union with the Methodists, his patience and perseverance in spite of the jeers of companions in toil and the scornful raillery of brothers at home. I had also been told of his pathetic prayers by his mother's deathbed, of his long and faithful labours as a devoted classleader and local preacher, and his marked usefulness as a visitor to the sick and dying. And how can I ever tell of the many unparalleled virtues attributed to Dinah Morris, of her heroic efforts to do good, her constant visitations of the afflicted, her preachings indoors and out for many years, and of a chain of events associated with her simple faith and consecrated zeal which were reported to me as nothing less than truly miraculous?

The early Methodists were firm believers in the miraculous, even as their great founder John Wesley himself was. To my young imagination Dinah Morris appeared to have moved in an atmosphere of supernatural influences during the greater portion of her life. All this was related to me as being associated with a character of singular sweetness, unaffected piety, rapt adoration and exceptional power in prayer. There were neither fanaticism, Pharisaism, nor selfishness in Dinah as she was presented to my young heart, which drank in these recitals with silent wonder and stored them away in the chambers of memory; and so, from very early years Dinah Morris came into my life as a familiar acquaintance, dear to my mother by close personal acquaintance and devoted family affection, and consequently dear to me.

In 1849 her death transfigured her for us all, and was the theme of much conversation in our home. This event occurred in Stonyshire, and it was all so serene and heavenly. Everything about her had a warm glow of supernatural interest. She was my mother's revered family saint, a woman of transcendent spirituality, a character almost ethereal; one who had in very deed walked with God, and was not because God had taken her. Then she lingered with us in a mystic aureola of heavenly glory, far off from us now in the world unseen. But lo, eleven years after her decease she truly rose from the dead. In that time her own beloved niece and my mother's first cousin had most strangely developed from the clinging girl whom Dinah Morris had known and loved in her youth, and early womanhood, into an author of lofty genius. ' It was this gifted niece who revealed the saintly aunt to a wondering world, transfigured indeed, and clothed in white robes of angelic beauty.

In the story of *Adam Bede*, Dinah Morris became my idealistic companion for many a year. Various little commissions I had to execute for my aged mother concerning Dinah's children and other relations, and after her death, in 1887, Dinah came, by the force of circumstances, into closer relations with me. In that year, on the sudden decease of the Rev. G. M. Murphy, I was unexpectedly called upon to leave my happy work in Bristol to take charge of the church of which Mr. Murphy had been pastor, and of the great mission which he had created at Lambeth Baths. Here I was constantly appalled by the slow starvation I saw going on around me, especially in times of general distress. All my public funds and private cash had gone to purchase supplies for these famishing people. Then I thought of Dinah Morris, and she became the principal theme of a lecture given to raise funds for the poor. Hundreds of pounds came to me, romances of charity happened, and many troubled souls were made to sing for joy.

In process of time failure of physical strength and nervous energy forced me out from this distressful but most blessed work in London, when I was called to a wider service, in which my health has been completely restored, in a sphere which gives me frequent change of air and calls me to travel over England and Wales as lecturer, preacher and missioner. Again and again have I been asked to give my lecture entitled "An Evening with Adam Bede." In that lecture, as in the fiction, Dinah is the central figure, not merely the Dinah as painted by George Eliot, but the real woman herself as I have come to know her, and she has truly dwelt with me, a perpetual charm and an abiding inspiration.

There is nothing in this world so supremely attractive as holiness. Let it but be presented in association with Christ-like sympathy and practical beneficence, and arrayed in such dress holiness commands the world. In these pages it will be my valued privilege to present the real Dinah Morris to my readers after this fashion, which was in fact, her own true life. In them I may have something to say concerning Thias and Lisbeth, Adam and Seth Bede. I may be able to relate something of interest also about Mrs. Poyser, but the principal charm in my story must centre in the strange experiences and remarkable incidents of the life of Dinah Morris.

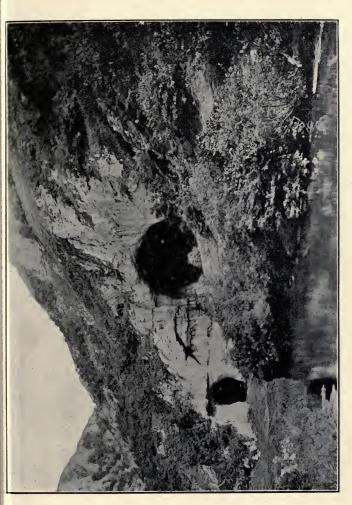
CHAPTER III

ADAM BEDE A FICTION FOUNDED ON FACT—THE SOURCES FROM WHICH THE FACTS WERE DERIVED

"Long, long be my heart with such memories filled! Like the vase in which roses have once been distilled: You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will, But the scent of the roses will hang round it still." Moore.

Is the preceding chapter I have named the family from whose living circle several of the prominent characters in Adam Bede were taken by its author. I have also indicated the part of the country where they spent their life—as to the parents, to life's close, and as to the sons till they were full grown men. I propose now to show how the story of Adam Bede adapts itself to the geography of this locality, how it agrees also with its dialect and fits in with the social conditions there at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, which are the times dealt with in the story of Adam Bede. I will, however, first forewarn the reader that he must not expect to find in this work of fiction exact biography, correct history, accurate geography, or even full dialect. These things are not promised to us, and we have no right to expect them, since it was no part of the author's purpose to furnish them. Her aim was entirely different. There-

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THE DOVEHOLES IN DOVEDALE (EAGLEDALE)



fore, in judging of her work, it is important to bear in mind the old maxim—

"In every work regard the author's end, Since none can compass more than they intend."

Many of George Eliot's statements in fiction have been seized upon by a certain class of writers and asserted as facts of real life, when, in reality, they were nothing of the kind. Thus, with the best intentions, fact and fiction have been so blended as to produce misleading and erroneous impressions. When reading a work of fiction we have, perhaps, no inherent right to inquire concerning the originals whom the author had in mind when constructing his plot and working out his details. Why not take the book as you find it, a work of literary craftsmanship, and so enjoy it and accept its lessons without troubling yourself as to the author's That is his secret—not yours. originals? This. I am sure, would be the feeling of many writers of fiction, and among them George Eliot. Indeed, it is not difficult to discover a tinge of irritation in respect of the earlier attempts to identify her characters. And vet, in spite of ourselves, the question will force itself upon us while reading fiction :--How much of this is real? and how much is the product of pure imagination? In the case of Adam Bede, there were weighty reasons why its author should deprecate attempts at identification. Among others, there was this : that similar attempts with regard to Scenes from Clerical Life had occasioned considerable annoyance. There were other reasons it is not necessary to name. There is, however, no need of reticence now, and in the course of years the authoress herself allowed several acknowledgments to be wrung from her which help us to a just conclusion.

The Geography, the characters and dialect of Adam Bede are in the main taken from Derbyshire and Staffordshire, but for all that Warwickshire has in all these respects crept into the story, as might have been antici-It should be remembered in passing, that in pated. writing her novel George Eliot did not consider herself bound to exact description. When Holman Hunt had conceived the idea of his great painting, the Shadow of Death, he is said to have resided in Nazareth for four years, at great sacrifice to himself, in order that all the settings of his picture might be accurate in detail and true to locality. Even our author, when preparing to write her historical novel, Romola, portraving the country and the times of the great monk Savonarola, found it necessary to reside for a while in Florence and to make large use, at great cost to herself in time and labour, as well as money, of its architecture, its paintings, its libraries and antiquities, to enable her accurately to construct her entrancing story. Even then her success was not so complete as her critics could have desired.

In writing Adam Bede the case was different. All the materials came from sources much nearer home. Her father's oft-repeated tale of his early life, together with the absorbing and captivating recitals of a beloved aunt, formed the ground-work of the book; while such geographical description as was required was already familiar to her eye by several visits to the undoubted scene of the story. These visits commenced when the author was only seven years of age, and they continued till she was a full-grown woman.

In Adam Bede we have frequent mention of the county town of Stoniton. The book itself supplies the evidence as to what county town is meant by this refer-



TISSINGTON SPIRES. DOVEDALE (EAGLEDALE.)

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ence. In Chapter XXII. we have related to us the gathering of the birthday party to celebrate the coming of age of Arthur Donnithorne, the young squire, and Martin Poyser, the senior, is made to say—"I remember Jacob Taft walking fifty miles after the Scotch raybels, when they turned back from Stoniton." One need hardly remark that the rebellion here alluded to is none other than that of 1745, led by the Young Pretender; or that it was from the town of Derby that the "raybels" began their inglorious retreat. Stoniton is thus identified to a certainty.

There is another veiled reference to Derby. In Chapter XLIII. we read : "The place fitted up that day as a court of justice was a grand old hall now destroyed by fire." It suffices to say that the town hall of Derby was so destroyed in 1841. Nottingham was the place where the prototype of Hetty Sorrel was tried and condemned. Our author fixes the venue in Derby.

We have another sign of locality in the questions and answers which passed between Adam and Hetty, concerning Eagledale, Chapter XX. Hetty is longing to know more about the place whither her secret lover, Arthur Donnithorne, has gone fishing. "Have you ever been to Eagledale?" she asks. "Yes," replies Adam, "ten years ago, when I was a lad. It's a wonderful sight, rocks and caves such as you never saw in your life. I never had a right notion o' rocks till I went there. There's nothing but a bit of a inn where he's gone to fish." To anyone knowing these parts there could be no manner of doubt that this description relates to Dovedale and to the Izaak Walton Hotel, which stands on an elevation near the Ilam end of the The inn of Adam Bede's time was simply a dale. farm-house with a licence attached to it; it has now

swollen into a comfortable hotel, dear to the hearts of anglers.



LION'S HEAD ROCK, DOVEDALE (EAGLEDALE).

Another distinctive geographical feature is the Binton Hills, described in Chapter II. : "High up against the horizon were the huge, conical masses of hill, like giant mounds, intended to fortify this region of corn and grass against the keen and hungry winds of the north." Here is an apt description of the Weaver Hills, occupying the northern side of the parish of Ellastone. Another may be quoted from a minor poet—

> "See how majestic Weaver's brow Swells from each broken scene below, O'er the wide vales he bends sublime, And triumphs in his polar clime."

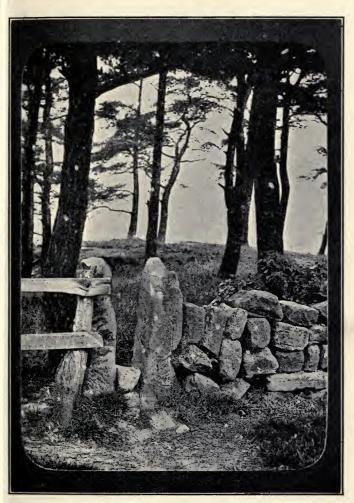
The Royal Engineers in making the Ordnance Surveys have found Weaver an admirable Station, one thousand two hundred feet high, and commanding a magnificent prospect on every side. It was on the highest mound of Weaver that Mr. A. L. Wragge began those meteorological observations which he has continued at the charges of the Government on the top of Ben Nevis. Weaver is an imposing feature of the district, conspicuous for many miles around.

In Adam Bede we have mention made of Oakbourne and the Buxton coach. Take out the prefix "Oak" and substitute "Ash," and you have the name of the town of Ashbourne, well known to Adam Bede as well as to George Eliot. The coaches between the two towns would be a reality in the days when the daughter was driven over the district by her father in his gig, and, doubtless, she saw them with her own eyes. The agreement of geographical names is at least suggestive, as between Norbury and Norburne, Ellastone and Treddlestone, Rocester and Rosseter, Ashbourne and Oakbourne, Warslow and Warson, Roston and Brox-Here is, at least, a marked coincidence of sound, ton. while it must be acknowledged that in other things the likeness does not hold good.

We have frequent contrasts in Adam Bede of two tracts of country which are contiguous to each other. We read of "that grim outskirt of Stonyshire," wherewith Dinah Morris stands associated ; " a bleak treeless region, intersected by lines of cold, grey stone." This is contrasted with "that rich undulating district of Loamshire," where Mrs. Poyser had her home. Mrs. Poyser, speaking of this grim outskirt, suggests that the inhabitants thereof "live on the naked hills like poultry a-scratching on a gravel bank." All this has its counterpart in the country where Adam Bede spent his early life, and over which he drove his wonderful daughter more than once. The high bleak country may be said to lie between Ashbourne and Wirksworth. and its tapering peaks are plainly visible from the top of Weaver, or from the gentle height on which Norbury church stands.

I will only mention one other geographical identifica-To a native who has travelled it is most conclution In Chapter III. Seth is walking with Dinah, sive. and is earnestly pressing upon her his matrimonial suit. "They had reached one of those narrow passes between two tall stones which performed the office of a stile in Loamshire." I can well understand how a person brought up amidst rural surroundings in Warwickshire would wonder at the construction of a Staf-The description is as precise as lanfordshire stile. guage can make it. And yet, in spite of our several identifications, which, in themselves, are unmistakable, I am fully persuaded that some stray bits of Warwickshire scenery have stolen into the narrative.

The dialect of Adam Bede tells a similar tale. It is not the dialect of Warwickshire, though words and phrases which are provincialisms there have been im-



A STAFFORDSHIRE STILE.

" Those very narrow passes between two tall stones which performed the office of a stile in Loanshire." Adam Bede.



ported into it; it is intended to be, and in the main is, representative of the common speech which prevailed in the district where Adam Bede's early days were Dialect is a most difficult matter with any spent. author, and we happen to know that George Eliot set much store by that of Adam Bede. When Lord Lytton pointed out to her what he considered two defects in the book-the dialect and Adam's marriage with Dinah, she said to her friends, "I would rather have my teeth drawn than part with either." She took special pains in her dealings with her publishers to have the provincialisms of her book correctly presented. It so happens that the Staffordshire dialect was familiar to me from infancy. My first residence away from this county was in Warwickshire, where I became familiar with the provincialisms of that county also. This entitles me to say that as in the geography, so in the dialect, a mixture from Warwickshire has crept in. In this matter we are helped by a suggestion from Miss Blind. She informs her readers in her book on George Eliot, that in the family of Adam Bede at Griff, "a broad provincial dialect was spoken." I have no doubt that this is true, and that the dialect was not only broad, but mixed also. The dialect of the book likewise, as of the home is a mixture. This I could conclusively prove were it necessary.

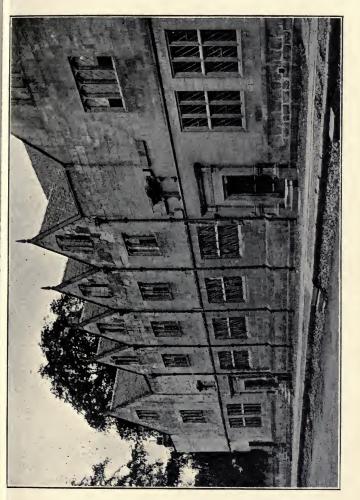
Local allusions are traceable in other particulars. The ordinary breakfast, we learn, in the home at Hayslope was a first course of oatmeal porridge, and a second of toasted oatcake served hot. I can quite believe this, only I am of opinion that good wholesome milk would be served with the porridge, fresh butter or home-made lard would be spread on the oatcake, or a dish of toasted cheese set beside it. The oatmeal would be grown in the parish and ground at Norbury mill. Fresh meat and wheaten bread, we are told, were delicacies to the people of Hayslope in the times of Adam Bede. Wheat was but little grown north of the Trent, and to purchase it was a privilege reserved to the well-to-do, since its cost was often four times as much as it is in these later days. The diet might be monotonous, but it had in it the elements of vitality and force, and there was reared on it a race of strong and vigorous men, of which Adam and Seth Bede were fine examples. The physical force of the men of Derbyshire has passed into an ancient proverb—

> "Derbyshire born, Derbyshire bred, Strong in the arms, weak in the head."

About the latter characteristic I will say nothing, but anyone visiting the charming county will find it peopled by a race of sturdy Saxon folk.

The parish wakes would loom large in the thoughts of the people of Norbury and Ellastone, and these festivities are several times alluded to in Adam Bede. Originally established as religious commemorations, they had degenerated into scenes of irreligious riot. Here our identifications must cease. If others were needed, the book would supply them in great abundance. Let us, however, complete our statement by turning to the account our author has given of the origin of her book in several scattered references. And, first of all, we are not surprised to discover that George Eliot's earliest attempt at fiction was descriptive of a Staffordshire village, although it never got beyond its first chapter and was never published. We also learn that somewhat late in life she made this acknowledgment concerning Adam Bede : " There are things in it

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"Oakbourne, that pretty town within eight miles of the blue hills" Adam Bede, Chap, xxxviii. ELIZABETHAN GRAMMAR SCHOOL, ASHBOURNE (OAKBOURNE).



ADAM BEDE FOUNDED ON FACT

CALIFOR

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about my father, *i.e.*, being interpreted, things my father told us concerning his early life." This it was that possessed the mind of the father in his old age, and we learn that, in the eight years of his comparative retirement, when his beloved daughter was his devoted house-keeper and daily companion, his conversation with her often ran back to the past, which was quite natural—

"When time, that steals our years away, Shall steal our pleasures too, -The memory of the past will stay, And half our joys renew."

These happy conversations, however, form only one portion of the primal suggestions from which Adam Bede sprang. Its author says : "The germ of Adam Bede was an anecdote told me by my Methodist aunt Samuel." "The incident lay on my mind for years, till time had made my mind a nidus in which it could fructify." "The character of Dinah grew out of my recollections of my aunt." "I was very fond of her. She was loving and kind to me, and I could talk to her of my inward life, which was closely shut up from those usually round me."

These extracts introduce the relative who, after her own immediate friends at home, filled the largest space in the warm affections of George Eliot in the earlier years of her life. In 1839, she writes to this beloved aunt (Dinah Morris), in prospect of a visit to her in Wirksworth, which afterwards took place : "I have a faint hope that the pleasure and profit I have felt in your society may be repeated this summer; there is no place I would sconer visit than Wirksworth, or the inhabitants of which have a stronger hold on my affections." This was not her only visit. Even as a child of seven she had been driven by her father over the whole region covered by the fiction, and this experience was repeated later on. The bleak hills were familiar to her own eyes. Ellastone and Ashbourne were well known to her. She mentions her visit to the fine parish church at the latter place, tells us of the wonders of Alton Towers, of Lichfield, its cathedral and monuments; of Uttoxeter, and other scenes of interest. Neither the father nor his daughter could have the faintest notion of the use that George Eliot would one day make of the material she gathered in so natural and simple a way from her father and her aunt.

One other visit to the aunt has been described to me by four persons who met her on that occasion. It was a more leisurely visit than those she had made in company with her father. This time she stayed with her cousin Samuel Evans the younger, who was a draper and velvet manufacturer in Wirksworth. Her aunt and herself spent much time together. She occupied some hours in writing down the aunt's experiences from her own lips, and was hardly ever seen in Wirksworth without a notebook and pencil in her hand.

I know that doubt has been thrown on the note-book account, as being unlike the author, but a recent writer who knew her well during her earlier life in London, declares that it was her habit in those days to carry her note-book and pencil with her continually.

I have lingered on these details because we thus see George Eliot, all unconscious of their future use, gathering the materials which, touched by the hand of her genius, were afterwards to be reproduced in such form as to command the admiration of the world. How many comedies, how many tragedies, how many startling and entertaining dramas are doomed to lie dormant and cold in the history of many a family, because there is no skilled hand to draw forth the latent fire, no literary artist to gather up the fragments and construct the story. To us, how instructive it is in the case of Adam Bede, that not only does the aged father, released from the bonds of active toil, fondly dwell on the simple facts of his own early life, in conversation with his beloved daughter—but even the daughter herself, after having acquired fame as a skilled literary artist, cannot refrain from going over that past again and again; first, in dealing with Mr. Hackitt, then in delineating Adam Bede, and finally in portraying Caleb Garth.

Furthermore, many competent critics have affirmed that in George Eliot's great career, her freest, most useful, and most abiding work is that wherein she has so copiously drawn upon her own experiences and her capacious memory. She was thankful, she said, to have written so true a book as *Adam Bede*. By this one work she has made myriads of readers her lifelong debtors, she has conferred a rich blessing on millions of mankind, she has happily distilled for us sweet roses of memory, and we may thankfully say that the fragrance of the precious flowers is round about the book for evermore.

CHAPTER IV

THE REAL LIFE STORY OF ADAM BEDE

"I ask not of his lineage, I ask not of his name— If manliness be in his heart, He noble birth may claim; The palace or the hovel, Where first his life began, I ask not of; but answer this— Is he an honest man?"

THE person whom we know as Adam Bede, in real life was known as Robert Evans. His career began its course in the home we have described, standing on Roston Common. He was the fourth son of George and Mary Evans, and was born in 1773. In those days the common was a breezy spot, with wide open spaces all around. Only the name of a common remains today. In 1824 it was enclosed and appropriated. The house stood by the wayside, with the workshop, the timber-stacks and the saw pit at the south end. In *Adam Bede* we read of another workshop at Hayslope, where Mr. Jonathan Burge was the proprietor, and Adam and Seth Bede were employed as journeymen.

We may as well dismiss the idea of a Mr. Jonathan Burge from our minds. He and his workshop are a creation of the literary artist to fill up the plan of her story. Mary Burge need not excite one whit of either

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our admiration or compassion. She is purely a child of the magician's wand. She was ideally required, and she came. She has served her purpose as a foil to other characters, therefore we may as well dispense with her.

It was in the father's workshop that Adam Bede first



HOUSE IN ELLASTONE (HAYSLOPE). Home of Robert Evans (Adam Bede) and subsequently of William Evans, Seur., and William Evans, Junr., the famous builders.

plied his craft. The business was of an inclusive kind. A considerable part of its range was to manufacture implements and appliances, carts and wagons, for the use of farmers. Iron was not employed then for ploughs and harrows as it is to-day. Hand labour had not been displaced by machinery, as is the case now. Hence, a considerable variety of tools had to be made locally. The village carpenter also manufactured the greater portion of the useful household furniture required by his neighbours; he was the coffin-maker and undertaker for the whole locality, and if new houses, cow-sheds, barns or stables were required, he would undertake their erection.

It was in this homely and useful industry that Adam Bede commenced his successful career. He was schooled to hard work from the beginning. There is no doubt he was a favourite pupil of Bartle Massey. Neither is there any doubt that he was the most hopeful of the five sons of his father, although only the fourth. The eldest brother was a generous goodhearted fellow, but the blighting and paralysing temptation of strong drink fastened its cruel fangs on him in early manhood. In consequence of this evil he did not make the best of his life, and was the only one of the brothers who did not survive to old age.

Adam Bede made his first independent venture in life by setting up in business for himself in the village of Ellastone, the next adjoining parish to Norbury, only divided from it by the river Dove. Ellastone afforded a more eligible situation for business and is a much larger parish. I do not think the young artisan had at this time any ambition beyond that of being a hard-working, energetic carpenter and builder. Out of his father's workshop he stepped into one of his own, still in friendly relations with the old home and the old business, which went on for some years under the superintendence of the father, assisted by others of the sons.

Eventually, the establishment of Roston Common was broken up and its interests concentrated at Ellastone, where the old gentleman died at the age of

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ninety years, A.D. 1830. How Adam Bede came to give up his prosperous business in Ellastone is a story quite easy to tell. In the parish there is a picturesque gentleman's seat called Wootton Hall. It is situated on the southern slope of Weaver Hill close to the ham-



WOOTTON HALL (DONNITHORNE CHASE). The seat of the Bromley Davenports, occupied by Francis Newdegate, Esq. (Donnithorne) at the beginning of last century.

let of Wootton. Concerning this small place there is a couplet which says :

"Wootton under Weaver, Where God comes never!"

I have heard it said that, if the statement expressed in this couplet had been really true, a much greater

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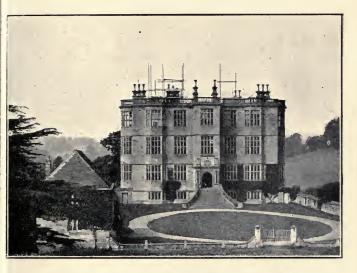
number of persons would have made it their abode than Wootton has ever contained, which is likely enough to be a true statement, since from the tenor of their lives it would appear there are many who would wish to get away from God, were it only possible to do so. I imagine that the author of the couplet, which is at least two centuries old, held a view of Wootton which was not intended to be complimentary to its inhabitants.

I have often thought that this little hamlet may have been in the author's mind when she wrote of Hayslope. It has many things in its favour, though, doubtless. Ellastone must retain the preference. Wootton has the distinction of giving a name to two romantic country seats, the other being the family abode of the Unwins, and is called Wootton Lodge. This building is a castellated mansion, said to have been designed by Inigo Jones. The scenery around it has inexpressible charm, and it is melancholy to reflect that the noble house is dismantled now, owing to the vagaries of its present owner, the well-known litigant, Mrs. Cathcart, whom I well remember as a Miss Unwin, and an heiress, many years ago. The scaffold poles on the roof of the house will show that the builders are now engaged in works of restoration.

In my early days Wootton Hall was both owned and occupied by the Rev. Walter Davenport Bromley, an eccentric and wealthy clergyman. By purchase he greatly extended the estate, and spent large sums of money in reclaiming and developing a wide tract of land on Weaver Hills; bringing it into cultivation and erecting upon it fences, farm-houses and out-buildings, raising plantations here and there, and so parcelling cut into farms an expanse which had been mostly an

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unproductive waste, covered with thorns, gorse and bracken. Well do I remember standing at the front door of my father's house when a boy, to watch in the evenings the blazing fires which continued for months



WOOTTON LODGE, THE COUNTRY SEAT OF THE UNWINS.

full in our view, whereby the low brushwood on Weaver was consumed to ashes preparatory to the cultivation of the soil.

Little did I think in those days that my eldest sister. then a young child at home, would spend the whole of her married years as a veritable Mrs. Poyser in real life, the cheerful and busy wife of an old schoolmate of mine, Mr. Jas. Wheeldon, who has in the process of years become the senior tenant-farmer on the Wootton estate, and has occupied in succession two of the farms reclaimed by the enterprise of the Rev. Walter Davenport Bromley. As far as I know, this gentleman was the only proprietor who, during the last century, occupied Wootton Hall for any length of time. Its usual fate has been to be let to a tenant, and it was so let in the days of Adam Bede.

The necessities of the case would seem to make this hall an indispensable part of the belongings of the author's story. It should be the "Donnithorne Chase " we read of, if there be any agreement at all between the biography and geography of the fiction. On this point there has been much speculation. Some writers are of opinion that Arbury Hall, in Warwickshire, is the real prototype of Donnithorne Chase; others affirm that Calwich Abbey, near Ellastone, the residence of the Duncombes, has that distinction. I think the latter has been mentioned because of the suggestion conveyed in the name that it has some time or other been the home of a religious fraternity, which is quite true, and is true also of Arbury. But I am of opinion, weighing all the circumstances of the case, that Wootton Hall is the true original of the Donnithorne Chase.

It was the squire of Wootton Hall who lifted Adam Bede out of his native surroundings and gave to his life an entirely new direction. This was one Francis Parker Newdegate, a scion of the Newdegates of West Hallam Hall, near Ilkeston, and also a relative of the Newdegates of Arbury Hall and Astley Castle in Warwickshire. This gentleman occupied Wootton Hall for some years prior to his succeeding to the extensive estates which afterwards fell to his lot both in Derbyshire and Warwickshire, and of which he was the owner till death deprived him in 1835. It was during

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Mr. Newdegate's residence at Wootton that he made the acquaintance of Adam Bede.

At first the clever young artisan was employed in his regular handicraft, which appears to have given lively satisfaction. He also formed an acquaintance with one Harriet Poynton, who was a highly-esteemed and con-



WEST HALLAM HALL, DERBYSHIRE ; SEAT OF THE NEWDEGATES.

fidential servant in the Newdegate family, and who ultimately became his first wife.

I was engaged to lecture in the Parish Schoolroom at Ellastone, in February, 1904, with the vicar as my chairman. I had written to that gentleman, suggesting that he might, in all probability, find in his parish register the record of the marriage of Robert Evans (Adam Bede) with this same Harriet Poynton. The vicar brought the register to the meeting, and, having found the record named, read it aloud to the hearers. Here is a copy of it :

"Robert Evans of this parish Bachelor and Harriet Poynton of this parish Spinster, were married in this church by Banns this 27th day of May, 1801, By me. John Webb, Curate.

This marriage was solemnised between us

Robert Evans Harriet Poynton

in the presence of Thomas Nicklin Ann Alcock."

Some of Adam Bede's relatives imbibed the notion that this union had not a little to do with his speedy promotion. Be this as it may, the advancement was sufficiently remarkable and was eminently satisfactory to both parties. It is evident that Adam Bede's first wife was a person much valued by the Newdegates, inasmuch as one of the Newdegate tablets in the chancel of Astley Church bears her name and records the fact that she was for "many years the friend and servant of the family at Arbury."

It is also manifest that Adam Bede himself won and retained the entire confidence of the Newdegates of more than one generation. When Mr. Francis Parker Newdegate became the owner of the West Hallam estate, he resolved to have Adam Bede as his estate manager and steward. In view of this appointment the business at Ellastone was transferred to his brother Thomas, while he himself, in addition to exercising the functions of steward, became a farmer also, residing at Kirk Hallam.

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The death of Sir Roger Newdegate, M.P., in 1806, wrought another change in the fortunes of Adam Bede. His patron now succeeded to the Arbury Hall and Astley Castle estate, the baronetcy becoming extinct, This estate was much more important than that at West Hallam, and was at once placed under the



FARMHOUSE, KIRK HALLAM, Where Robert Evans (Adam Bede) lived from 1802 till 1806.

management of Adam Bede. The farm he had occupied at Kirk Hallam was now transferred to his brother Thomas, with a sub-agency, and the business at Ellastone passed to their brother William, in whose hands, and those of his son, it rose to great distinction.

In Warwickshire, the newly-appointed steward became a farmer, even as he had been at Kirk Hallam.

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For a period of fourteen years he occupied Arbury Farm, close to Arbury Park. Here the first Mrs. Evans died, in 1809, leaving two children, Robert and Frances Lucy. My aunt Harriett was named after this good woman, and my mother after her only daughter.

In 1813 the second marriage occurred ; three children were born of this union, of whom "George Eliot" was the youngest, her birth happening in December, 1819. The next year Arbury Farm was given up and Griff House, with the farm attached to it, became the abode of the family for the remaining portion of Adam Bede's business career. It is a spacious dwelling, pleasantly situated by the side of the road from Nuneaton to Coventry, and embosomed among shrubs and trees. Everything now prospered with Adam Bede. His dairying business was well managed by his thrifty and capable wife, and he himself became an acknowledged authority in the management of estates for many miles around. One landowner after another engaged his services, until he became chief steward to Lord Aylesford, Lord Lifford, Mr. Bromley Davenport, and other proprietors. Besides this, he was in large request as consulting steward, arbitrator With his familiar horse and gig he and valuer. covered many thousands of miles every year.

As a steward he seems to have been both wise and just, but to the thriftless and incapable he could be relentless and firm. If tenants were in difficulties, but exhibited worthy traits of character, he would be patient and helpful, and while retaining the confidence of all his clients, he was also respected and trusted by the tenantry. He was a staunch churchman and a steadfast Tory, who believed with an unwavering faith in the existing institutions both in Church and State,

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and was not quick to see why others should be dissatisfied with a social order which gave him so much complacency. That they were dissatisfied was not to their credit; still, he was too tolerant and too busy to



THE TINY CHURCH AT KIRK HALLAM, OPPOSITE TO THE FARM OCCUPIED - BY ROBERT EVANS (ADAM BEDE).

interfere with them for their religious or political views; nevertheless, it could be seen that such persons did not rank high in his judgment.

The presentation of Adam Bede in the novel only relates to the Derbyshire and Staffordshire days, while

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in Mr. Hackit and Caleb Garth we have the stewardfarmer of later life. The author guards us against the supposition that Adam Bede is an exact portrayal of her father, and we are bound to accept her unquestionable authority. Nevertheless, it is pointed out by her personal friends, Mr. Oscar Browning and Sir Leslie Stephen, that much more of her experiences in real life crept into her stories than she was fully conscious of or would even allow. All who knew the Robert Evans of real life and his prosperous and useful career would acknowledge that his portrayal in *Adam Bede* is just such an one as might have been suggested by the author's close knowledge of her own father.

And what is it that we have before us in the portrait of Adam? I make no hesitation whatever in saying that we have here the finest description of a workman which literature has ever produced. To have painted for us such a character amid such surroundings and such issues, the authoress has become a world-benefactress. What a manly man is Adam Bede! Doubtless, he has his faults. He is imperious, impatient and somewhat austere in his judgments at times, but in the inner soul of him how tender he is, how truthful, how independent, how magnanimous, how real, how reverent and godly. How well worthy of his place as bass singer in Norbury Church choir is this real Adam Bede. There is no festering mould of weakness anywhere, none of that "moral see-saw" which, in Arthur Donnithorne, was the cause of irresolution and mischief. This is a rare character. You find in Adam not an atom of pretence, cant, or humbug. Here is a man true to himself, and has not our great poet told us that he who is true to himself can never be false to any other man? He loves work ; to him it is not



Built by the Rev. W. Davenport Bromley on Weaver Hills (Binton Hills). Occupied Ly Mr. Jas. Wheeldon.

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sent as a curse, but is taken as it is—a real blessing both to the worker himself and the world he helps and adorns. He will be just, whether to employers or employed, and he will ever do all his work as consciously under the Great Taskmaster's eye. How pleasant is the picture of him breaking the concert of the tools in the workshop at Hayslope by singing in manly sonorous tones :

> "Let all thy converse be sincere, Thy conscience as the noonday clear: For God's all-seeing eye surveys Thy secret thoughts, thy works and ways."

When the work for the day is all done the same noble strain fills his soul and employs his voice as he plods his way homeward. You have here a man who hates with burning hatred all that is mean and contemptible, despises all shams, and has honestly deserved all the success he has won in the world. It does us good to contemplate the picture of such a model of a man as this.

Two brief extracts from letters written by Adam Bede to his brother Seth, when both were advancing in years, will serve to show on what excellent terms the brothers were to the last, and will help to confirm the view of Adam portrayed for us by his gifted daughter. They were both dated from Foleshill, the home of retirement, near Coventry. They will also show that even in his days of age and leisure he was frequently engaged as consulting steward for some of his old employers, to whom he still alludes as his masters.

"I am very thankful that my health is pretty good, and I am happy with my masters, and go on very pleasantly with all of them, but I feel my strength failing me in some degree this last year. I cannot walk so much as I wish to do, as I like

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walking so much better than riding when I go over farms. I am glad to hear that my brother William is better [Mr. Wm. Evans, senr., of Ellastone]; he is, I believe, going into his 75th year and I am in my 71st. We must not expect to continue here many more years, but we must be like good soldiers. When the word of command is given I hope we shall be both ready and willing to obey the call, and leave all these good things provided for us here which we enjoy so much, and which I am very thankful for as well for my family as for myself, as I have been blessed in this world more than I ever expected to Mary Ann (George Eliot) is very well, and sends her love be. to you. I am glad to hear that your wife [Dinah Morris] holds pretty well. Give my best respects and love to her, and accept the same yourself from If from "Your loving brother, "R. Evans."

This letter is written "September 22nd, 1843," and there is a later one under date of "May 27th, 1844." In this the writer makes a statement which one could appropriately associate with the Adam Bede we know in literature.

"I hope your health will continue good so that you can perform your duties. It is a happy thing that you have not to keep the accounts, as you are getting older every day. Looking after the workmen is a pleasure to me; I had rather do it than not. Those who have been industrious and have led an active life will never be so happy out of business, though they could afford it."

There speaks the old, practical, common-sense Adam Bede.

One story told me by the youngest son and successor in the estate agency of the real Adam Bede I will here relate. It was my pleasure to dine with this gentleman (Mr. Isaac Pearson Evans) in the Inns of Court Hotel, in Holborn, in the month of October, 1890. He was then a fine, hale-looking man, upright in stature, fresh in complexion, positive in speech, with

the strongly-marked characteristics of the Evans family. You could always trace in the Evanses, as I knew them, a certain self-respecting dignity, definiteness of opinion, a good degree of confidence in their own judgment, strong common-sense, strict regard for truth, sterling uprightness, deep-toned reverence, and supreme respect for that which is proper and respectable. At the time of our interview, Mr. Evans was over seventy years of age, and had not been very well. Still, to look at him, one would have thought that there might be in store for him several years of useful activity before the end came. He told me, however, that of late the feeling had come over him that his active work was nearly, if not quite, done. I reminded him of the old age of many of our mutual relations, and said I could see no reason why he should not attain a similar age. His only reply was, with a deep-drawn sigh, to say that he had the feeling it was not to be so. Within four days of this interview he was summoned hence by sudden death !

It was not for this solemn intimation that I introduced Mr. Evans' name in this connexion, but to relate an anecdote he told me, illustrative of the character of his father, the original Adam Bede. He said that one day towards the end of his life his father referred to the moderate estate he would leave behind him. He said it would not be found to be a large amount, that many men placed in his circumstances would have grown very rich, but that he had always made it his first aim in life to do the best he could for all the clients who had employed him. What a different world it would be if all were equally true to their trusts !

I think this picture of the real Adam Bede, from the

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lips of his son, may fitly close our account of his worthy life. Does it not agree perfectly with the finished presentation of him given us by his gifted daughter in her noble book? and does it not discover to us the lofty ideals of an honest man? Is it not also a true saying about an honest man given to us by Alexander Pope—and such as he describes, in truth, was Adam Bede always:

> "A wit's a feather, and a chief a rod; An honest man's the noblest work of God."

CHAPTER V

ALL ABOUT MRS. POYSER

"Though long the wanderer may depart, And far his footsteps roam, He clasps the closer to his heart The image of his home. To that loved land, where'er he goes, His tenderest thoughts are cast, And dearer still through absence grows The memory of the past."—BURNS.

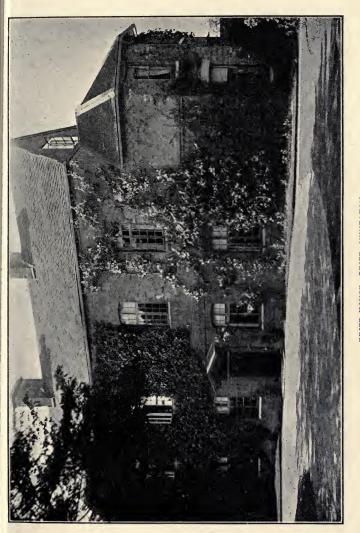
In our endeavour to trace the original of Mrs. Poyser we must needs concern ourselves with the household at Griff, for it is thitherward our eyes must be turned if we would pursue her identity. I used to think that the Hall farm must be sought for in Staffordshire; I am now quite clear that Griff House affords us the scene where the prototype of Mrs. Poyser actually lived and reigned as the presiding genius of the place. This harmonises with the view expressed in a former chapter that the geography and dialect of Adam Bede are a cross between Staffordshire and Warwickshire. On many grounds I am persuaded that in writing of the Hall Farm George Eliot had Griff House in her mind, and that in delineating for our instruction and diversion the delightful character of Mrs. Poyser she took as her original no other person than her own mother. We have seen that Adam Bede was a farmer at Griff as

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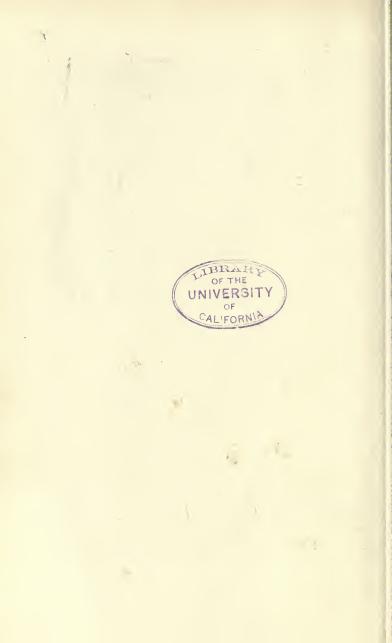
well as steward of the estate to which the farm belonged. It is a little disconcerting perhaps to find that the same actual person should supply the lines of suggestion for two characters in the same story, but then we have to remember that it is fiction that is given us in the book, and according to its laws this is by no means impossible. It may be noted also that, in his daughter's fiction, Adam Bede has two acknowledged aliases, viz., Mr. Hackit and Caleb Garth, and that Mrs. Poyser has at least one in the person of Mrs. Hackit, who cared so pityingly for the amiable Milly Barton.

When Adam Bede was written George Eliot was for ever separated from her old Warwickshire home, yet her literary record shows how closely its memories clung to her, and how her genius continued to work among the fond recollections gathered there. In her works of fiction her relatives turn up again and again, as witness the three separate in Scenes from Clerical Life. in stories Adam Bede, in The Mill on the Floss, and in Middlemarch. These all deal with her cherished memories of the past, and in every one of them her loved relations are among the originals. Let us not be surprised. therefore, if the remembrances of the past as relating to her father and mother supplied to her prolific genius the slender framework of suggestion, out of which were evolved the fine characters of Martin and Mrs. Poyser, as well as of other attractive personalities in the author's several stories.

We may now turn to the noble farm-house at Griff, and regard it as the undoubted scene of Mrs. Poyser's skilful management as wife, mother, mistress of the household and dairywoman. In those days



GRIFF HOUSE, GRIFF, NUNEATON. Home of Robert Evans (Adam Bede) 1820-1841.



farm labour was not all wrought out of doors as is mostly the case now. This country did not then import its chief supplies of cheese and bacon from the United States and the Dominion of Canada, nor were our great and ever-growing towns supplied with fresh butter from Denmark, Holland. Normandy and Lombardy. Hard as the men toiled out of doors, the women worked as laboriously indcors in the constant drudgery of dairy manufactures, added to ordinary domestic industry. To produce from the milk of kine good, sound, well-flavoured cheese, and choice, sweet butter, is not an easy thing to do. There are delicate processes to be gone through which require no ordinary degree of forethought, judgment, and skill; while unremitting care and labour are certainly entailed. "I've made one quarter o' th' rent and saved another quarter," says Mrs. Poyser in her stormy remonstrance with Mr. Donnithorne. How true a picture is involved in those words, and how often have I heard precisely similar expressions among the busy housewives and skilful dairywomen of Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Often the farmer has had to look to the product of the cheese-room for the supply of his rent, to say nothing of rates, taxes, and wages. Hence, how all-important is the manufacture carried on in the dairy from day to day under the vigilant eye and by the careful hands of the farmer's wife. The modern factory system and the sale of milk to supply the needs of the great towns have changed all this, and what appears singular is that foreign-made dairy products seem to command readier sale than those still manufactured from the fair pastures of old England. In the days of Adam Bede it was not so, and, indoors and out, farming required constant toil, as witness the distich I remember from the time I was a boy, though I confess I did not very well like it then :

"Man to the plough, Wife to the sow, Boy to the flail, Girl to the pail, And your gains will be netted:— But man Tallyho, Miss, piano, Boy, Greek and Latin, Wife, silk and satin, And you'll soon be gazetted."

There was not the slightest danger of any catastrophe of this kind under the smart régime of Mr. and Mrs. Poyser. Quite as strongly as Adam Bede himself, this excellent farmer's wife and skilled dairywoman believed in the wholesome discipline of labour, and practised in their highest degree of perfection the salutary duties of household management. There is no doubt that all this may be applied to our author's mother, and, for several years, to the author herself. If we blend in one the characters of Mrs. Hackit in Amos Barton (Scenes from Clerical Life) and Mrs. Poyser in Adam Bede, we may well gather what George Eliot's mother really was. Indeed, Miss Blind feels so confident on this point that she traces to inheritance from the mother George Eliot's pointed speech, racy humour, and marvellous powers of observation. After her mother's death in 1836, and the marriage of the elder sister in 1837, our author became herself the busy housekeeper and skilful dairywoman at Griff for the space of four years. Surely it is a suggestive picture-the future writer of Adam Bede, Middlemarch, Romola, and Daniel Deronda toiling in this capacity. I wonder if in the United

ALL ABOUT MRS. POYSER

Kingdom there could have been found another dairywoman who was at the same time proficient in the Latin, Greek, French, and German languages, was studying Spanish and Italian under a master, receiving weekly music lessons, reading a variety of secular



CHILVERS COTON CHURCH, NUNEATON (The Shepperton Church of Scenes from Clerical Life).

and sacred literature, and pursuing at the same time an earnest Christian life in which you find from a letter of hers belonging to this period that one of the cherished aspirations of her heart finds expression in the words, "May I seek to be sanctified wholly!" How suggestive is all this. There rests upon this young woman the care of the household and the

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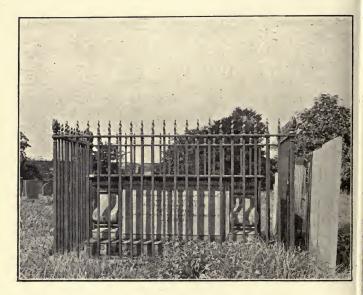
management of the dairy, she toils continually with her hands; so that in later life she has to explain to her literary friends that her right hand remained larger than her left from the labour of making cheese and butter, and yet, though still in her teens, she finds time for these varied intellectual pursuits! I imagine that such an experience stands quite alone, and is worthy of our serious contemplation. The father's responsibilities are exceptionally heavy. Each day he starts on his business rounds in his familiar gig, his capable daughter attending to the various interests indoors, as her mother had done before her. She was able also to receive visitors, for it was at this period that her aunt Dinah Morris was brought hither from Wirksworth by her father for needed rest and change. She also finds time to accompany him on some of his business drives, which stretched over wide districts of the surrounding country. To him she was a dear companion and choice treasure. How he must often have wondered that his daughter should live this high intellectual life amidst such surroundings, to which none of his name, nor he himself had ever before aspired. Some of her biographers hint that she scarcely ever appears to have been a girl at all, but attained the gravity and the mind of a woman at a surprisingly early age.

All this will now prepare us to realise how well she was equipped to construct for us, out of the record of her own varied experiences, the precise and idyllic picture she has given us of that realm of sweetness and purity where Mrs. Poyser, the dairywoman, bears unquestioned rule. None but a dairywoman herself could have pictured such a dairy. Not a member of ALL ABOUT MES. POYSER

the family who knew the original, or has heard by family tradition of her capable management, her clockwork exactitude, her clever tongue, her real kindness, together with her genuine devotion as wife and mother, would ever doubt as to what person was in her mind when George Eliot drew her fascinating portrait of Mrs Poyser. From such relatives I have had most positive testimony to this effect. Nevertheless, even here we must heed George Eliot's warning that we are not to look into her work for family portraits. The mother's life and character as known to the daughter suggested but the mere skeleton-that is all. And vet, has it not been said, and may there not be a good deal of truth in the saying, that biography is fiction and fiction biography? In this case, though there is a considerable proportion of biography in our author's work, yet the clever utterances of Mrs. Poyser are all the author's own. She had no repertory of sparkling witticisms or pithy proverbs to be drawn upon at pleasure. Even those famous sayings, familiar in our mouths as household words, came to the author while writing, fresh from her own mint. What a wonderful mint that was, for it has yielded a priceless store of flashing humour, by the possession of which the literary world is all the richer and merrier. " Steam and progress have made the world less youthful and joyous than it was then," said the famous James Nasmyth, inventor of the steam-hammer, when writing of the days of the Battle of Waterloo. The Rev. F. D. Maurice, preaching on the Christmas Day of 1837, said : "It seems to me the general opinion that people are not so merry on this day as they used to be." Of our own times all this may be said with greater emphasis. In spite of all our modern advantages—the

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increase of knowledge, the spread of literature, the multiplication of the conveniences and comforts of modern life, the outflow of wealth and luxury, the vast enlargement of our existence on this planet—there



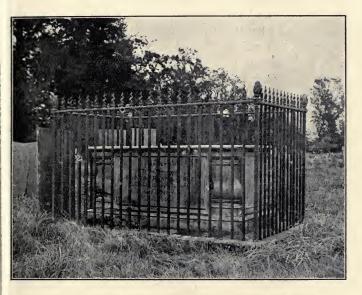
TOMB IN CHILVERS COTON OF CHRISTIANA EVANS, SECOND WIFE OF ROBERT EVANS AND THE ORIGINAL OF MRS. POYSER.

would seem to have been rather a diminution than an increase of human cheerfulness. Mrs. Poyser comes to us with a fresh breeze of innocent merriment and a pleasant ripple of wholesome laughter. She is like some of Dickens' most famous characters—entirely irresistible, and the world's grey sky is brightened somewhat by the advent of a

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literary portrait of such unquestionable power and mirth-provoking charm.

Sir Leslie Stephen says that Mrs. Poyser is among the immortals, and one may add that the world is none



REVERSE SIDE OF TOMB, SHOWING MEMORIAL OF ROBERT EVANS (ADAM BEDE).

the worse for having so bright a character enshrined in its treasured literature.

It is not my purpose to quote a large number of her famous sayings, but I must be allowed to give some of them for the sake of the lessons they convey, and the facts of life which they illustrate. Under the keen, incisive humour there is a hard substratum of fact, and often a world of meaning. The inimitable remonstrance with an estate landlord who, with all his studied politeness, cannot be induced to spend money on the farm-buildings to keep them in decent repair, but shows the readiest alacrity in raising the rents of the tenantry, may have little application in respect of the realities of the Hall Farm, but too often in the relations of landlord and tenant that application has been all too pointedly and painfully true. The old squire has come to the farm-house to propose to Mr. Martin Poyser the surrender of the most desirable of his arable land to accommodate Mr. Thurle, to whom he proposes to let the adjoining farm. Now, anyone acquainted with the processes of farming as it was under the Corn Laws, and who remembers the restrictions imposed by landlords in tortuous legal agreements, will realise that the profit of a farm greatly depended upon the right balance between the dairying and arable lands on the holding. Mrs. Poyser clearly perceives that the landlord's proposed changes will not only increase the amount of labour in her own department, but will wrest from the farm those fields which, under Mr. Poyser's careful tillage, yield wheat from which is ground the flour that supplies their wholesome home-made bread, oats from which is made the oat-cake for the kitchen table, where the farm-labourers and hired servants were fed in those days, and various corn for feeding-stuffs used for horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, turkeys, and geese. The arable land also produced turnips, cabbage, and clover, which were valued helps in feeding the stock, and Mrs. Poyser is quick to discern that the change proposed by the landlord will dislocate everything on the farm, and work to their serious disad-

ALL ABOUT MRS. POYSER

vantage. When the landlord came to the Hall Farm to submit his proposals to Mr. Martin Poyser he obtained much more than he bargained for. He first walked the round of the dairy and cheese-room, admiring everything he saw, and bestowing playful and flattering compliments on Mrs. Poyser in his progress



PREMISES AT GRIFF HOUSE, USED BY MRS. EVANS (MRS. POYSER) AS DAIRY.

through the apartments. That lady, however, is in no mood to be flattered. Now, Mr. Poyser, it should be said, is in many respects an exceptionally wise man, as well as a good farmer, for he has a good wife, and he knows it, while there are many equally good men who also have good wives but do not seem to know it, which is much to be regretted, and it really makes a great difference. Here is another token of Mr. Poyser's

wisdom. He has opinions of his own which on occasion he can express, as we discover at the birthday feast, slowly and deliberately, but he is frequently made to realise that his wife is a woman with opinions which she well knows how to utter without any circumlocution whatever. Hence, when a new occasion arises, he is slow to venture on expressing his own views until he has first ascertained what his keen-witted wife thinks about the matter. How often have I known husbands go plunging headlong into trouble from which they might have saved themselves had they but condescended to act on the judgment arrived at by the shrewd, keen instincts of a sensible wife, When, in the case before us, the husband, according to his custom, referred the landlord's proposal to his irate spouse, little did he think of the avalanche which would be let loose on the landlord's devoted head. The truth is Mrs. Poyser had long been waiting for the opportunity which had now come to her, she had even prepared little speeches for the coveted occasion, and now that it had actually come she resolved to make the most of it. I have known village squires who were very much of the tone and temper of Mr. Donnithorne, but the pity was there was no Mrs. Poyser, with keen mother wit, and clever, rasping tongue, to characterise their selfish dealing with their tenants in a manner appropriate to the circumstances. Let us hope that, if the Mrs. Poysers are rare, the landlords such as she castigates are rare also. From a lengthy conversation I take for quotation Mrs. Poyser's biting speech in answer to the landlord's proposal for the surrender of the arable land.

"Then, sir, if I may speak-as, for all I'm a woman, and

there's folks as thinks a woman's fool enough to stan' by an' look on while the men sign her soul away, I've a right to speak, for I make one quarter o' the rent, and save another quarter-I say if Mr. Thurle's so ready to take farms under you, it's a pity but what he should take this, and see if he likes to live in a house wi' all the plagues o' Egypt in't-wi' the cellar full o' water, and frogs and toads hoppin' up the steps by dozens-and the floors rotten, and the rats and mice gnawing every bit o' cheese, and runnin' over our heads as we lie i' bed till we expect 'em to eat us up alive-as it's a mercy they hanna eat the children long ago. I should like to see if there's another tenant besides Poyser as 'ud put up wi' never having a bit o' repairs done till a place tumbles down-and not then, on'y wi' begging and praying, and having to pay halfand being strung up wi' the rent as it's much if he gets enough out o' the land to pay, for all he's put his own money into the ground beforehand. See if you'll get a stranger to lead such a life here as that: a maggot must be born i' rotten cheese to like it, I reckon. You may run away from my words, sir," continued Mrs. Poyser, following the old Squire beyond the door-for after the first moments of stunned surprise he had got up, and, waving his hand towards her with a smile, had walked out towards his pony. But it was impossible for him to get away immediately, for John was walking the pony up and down the yard, and was some distance from the causeway when his master beckoned.

"You may run away from my words, sir, and you may go spinnin' underhand ways o' doing us a mischief, for you've got Old Harry to your friend, though nobody else is, but I tell you for once as we're not dumb creatures to be abused and made money on by them as ha' got the lash i' their hands, for want o' knowing how t' undo the tackle. An' if I'm the only one as speaks my mind there's plenty o' th' same way o' thinking i' this parish and the next to't, for your name's no better than a brimstone match in everybody's nose—if it isna two-three old folks as you think o' saving your soul by giving 'em a bit o' flannel and a drop o' porridge. An' you may be right i' thinking it'll take but little to save your soul, for it'll be the smallest savin' y' iver made, wi' all your scrapin'."

This pungent remonstrance by Mrs. Poyser was not made more delectable to the old squire from the con-

sideration that Molly and Nancy and Tim were grinning in front of him, and that probably old John the groom was grinning behind him. He rides away from the farm with the ringing sarcasms of the farmer's wife resounding in his ears; while she, re-



FARM BUILDINGS, GRIFF HOUSE.

lieved in mind because of her fierce discharge of fireworks, returns to the house to rejoin her husband. It is in the very blood of the country-bred farmer to have a reverent fear of his landlord, and it is not to be wondered at that Mr. Poyser should feel alarmed and uneasy as to the consequences which would most likely follow from Mrs. Poyser's caustic and unmerciful attack on the old squire. He expresses his apprehensions and uneasiness in the laconic sentence : "Thee'st done it now !" To this Mrs. Poyser replies :

"Yes, I know I've done it; but I've had my say out, and I shall be the easier for't all my life. There's no pleasure i' living, if you're to be corked up for ever, and only dribble your mind out by the sly, like a leaky barrel. I shan't repent saying what I think, if I live to be as old as th' Squire; and there's little likelihoods—for it seems as if them as aren't wanted here are th' only folks as aren't wanted i' th' other world."

The old home at Griff, fair and pleasant to look upon, is likely to remain, as all would wish it to remain, a lively scene of dairying work for many years to come; for it is now a County Council Dairy School, and many young maidens go there regularly to learn the art and mystery of dairy operations on those same premises with which the memory of Mrs. Poyser is indissolubly linked, and where the immortal George Eliot was also a skilful maker of fine Leicester cheese and sweet, wholesome butter.

CHAPTER VI

HAYTIME AT THE HALL FARM AND THE HARVEST SUPPER

"The morn was blithe and gay, And the fields flower-foam; "Tis the end of the day, And the last load home."—TENNYSON.

PERHAPS no one ever wrought in literature with a heavier sense of responsibility than George Eliot. There was no haste, no slap-dash, no straining after Everything was carefully considered, arranged effect. in orderly manner, well digested, natural, and well-Every book had its message, and every expressed. scene described was duly adjusted to the reality. At the back of all fiction which is worth the writing, there lie the awful realities of human life. A great writer of fiction has the seer's gift, can penetrate beneath the surface of things, can divine motives and portray character. He has also the dramatic faculty, he has wit. humour and pathos, he is the skilled interpreter of character and life. The function of the novelist, in its highest sense, is one of the greatest. It is to her honour that George Eliot accepted her astonishing gifts in the consciousness of the solemn responsibility they entailed upon her. She took her calling seriously, always distrusting herself, always desponding of the

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future, always doubting her power to accomplish anything until it was done. Her conscientiousness in the discharge of her high calling is conspicuous in all her works. Accuracy of perception, faithfulness in delineation, the demand for a picture true in all its details, were considerations ever present to her thoughts. To secure these things she spared herself no pains, shrank from no enquiry, and ransacked every available source of information. I think her most laboured book was Romola. This lay outside her own experiences. To qualify herself for the task of writing it she made a special tour to Florence, explored its architecture, ransacked its libraries, searched its picture galleries, hunted up old books at shops and stalls, making notes to guide her pen in what is undoubtedly one of the greatest historical fictions. The same conscientious care was shewn in the rendering of the legal bearings of the Transome estates in Felix Holt, as related to her story in that book. For the sake of accuracy in this matter she took the opinion of an able barrister. Such scrupulous caution is manifest in all her work. Test it anywhere, and you will find that her delineations accord well with the local customs, manners, habits and folk-lore of the people or places of whom she writes.

Farm life has never been so vividly depicted as by George Eliot, and the life of the country in general the village life of England—has never been so fully portrayed. The poet Crabbe, in an earlier generation, and with much minuteness of detail, had given a series of pictures of rural life as he saw it in his day, but George Eliot is par excellence the true delineator of country life as she saw it, and in this walk of literature has found no equal. The

late Lord Acton said of her : "No writer ever lived who had anything like her power of manifold, but disinterested and impartial sympathy. If Sophocles or Cervantes had lived in the light of our culture, if Dante had prospered like Manzoni, George Eliot might have had a rival. George Eliot seemed to me capable not only of reading the diverse hearts of men, but of creeping into their skin, watching the world through their eyes, feeling their latent back-ground of conviction, discerning theory and habit, influence of thought and knowledge, of life and descent, and having obtained this experience, recovering her independence, stripping off the borrowed shell, and exposing scientifically and indifferently the soul of a Vestal or Crusader, an Anabaptist, an Inquisitor, a Dervish, a Nihilist, or a Cavalier, without attraction, preference, or caricature." This witness is true.

Another great gift she had was sympathy with the toiling, struggling multitude. It is this gift joined to those so eloquently portrayed by Lord Acton which lends such pathos to her work, a quality which has been felt by all who have read Adam Bede. The Mill on the Floss, or Silas Marner, not to mention others of her books. She shews us, as no other writer has done, what tragedy, pathos and humour may be lying in the experience of a human soul "that looks out through dull grey eyes. and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones." George Eliot in some of her essays had taught that reformers must needs familiarise the imagination with the real condition of the people, their wants, their trials and their sufferings. These are precisely the qualities exhibited in George Eliot's novels. She was endowed with an extraordinary power of portraying the wants.

HAYTIME AT THE HALL FARM

the miseries, and the aspirations of the common people. When such powers are turned upon the small community in a country place like Hayslope, there is no wonder that a picture is drawn which has already become immortal. No part of the country changes so slowly



THE SAWMILL AND BUILDER'S YARD AT NORBURY.

This business has been developed from that started by Robert Evans (Adam Bede) at Ellastone (Hayslope).

as does your rural Hayslope. But, stationary as such places are, as compared with other districts, even there many things are different from what they were in the days of Parson Irwine and Mrs. Poyser. The incoming of railways has changed most things. Milk goes largely to the great towns now instead of being converted into cheese and butter as it used to be before leaving the farm premises. The growth of the great towns, and the spread of manufactures and commercial industry, have attracted the labourers from the country villages to crowd the urban centres. Our Hayslope farmers would be badly off indeed if work had to be done in the fashion prevailing in the times of Martin Poyser.

Let us first see how accurate is George Eliot's picture of the appointments of a farm-house as it was in these olden times. In Chapter XIX. of Adam Bede we see Mrs. Poyser laying the cloth for supper. "A cloth made of home-spun linen-none of your bleached shop-rag, but good home-spun that would last for two generations." A modern reader would not be likely to discern the reality that lurks in an utterance like that. The same remark applies to sundry references in the Mill on the Floss. Poor Mrs. Tulliver, after the unfortunate law-suit, is looking over her store of linen cloths, which must now be sold from the family to help to pay her husband's debts, she is bemoaning her sad fate in conversation with her son Tom, and ruefully says : "To think o' these cloths as I spun myself, and Job Haxey wove 'em." Later on Mrs. Tulliver's sister, Mrs. Pullet, contemplates parting with some of her fondly cherished linen to appear on the tables at Dorlcote Mill, when young Tom Tulliver has won the place back for the family, and says to Mrs. Tulliver, his mother : "It's poor work dividing one's linen before one dies. I niver thought to have done that, Bessy, when you and me chose the double diamont, the first flax iver we'd spun, and the Lord knows where yours is gone." Behind these stray references there is a world of meaning to one who remembers country life more than sixty years ago. The

spinning wheel was an institution in every farm-house. My mother did not use it because factories had grown up, and sheets, blankets, counterpanes, and even worsted for our stockings was already being produced by machinery, and so the spinning wheel and cottage hand loom were fast disappearing when I was a boy. Nevertheless, the worsted was still spun by my aged grandmother, who thought the times were becoming degenerate because the younger women did not now sit at the spinning wheel as their elders had done before them. In my own case, the bed-tick on which I slept, the blankets, sheets and counterpane which covered me, and the tester head-piece and curtains which closed me in all around at night, as though shut up in a tent, were all hand-spun and hand-woven. The village weaver was an institution in those days. In the farm houses the busy spinning wheel made its merry racket each day, and the yarns so spun were wrought into cloths by the cottage weaver. So true to life are these references in our author's fictions. In Adam Bede we read of the "bright pewter plates and spoons and cans," in Mrs. Poyser's kitchen. Here is another true touch of the literary artist. How well I remember the old oaken dresser in many a farm-house. There you would see whole dinner services in bright pewter. Even after Staffordshire earthenware had taken the place of the shiny pewter for all ordinary use, you would see carefully preserved on the dresser shelves the graded sizes of pewter dishes to hold the joints of meat, and the soup plates and shallow plates for the use of the guests and the family at table. I have partaken of many a fine joint of beef served to the table upon a huge pewter dish in the times of old. I have a tender place in

my memory for the ancient dresser and its polished array of radiant pewter.

There is another historic touch which tells of things as they were long ago. In Adam Bede, Chapter X1X. we are told of havtime at the hall farm, and we read that "the master and servants ate their supper not far off each other." There was much more of such communism in those times than obtains to-day. The workers frequently took their rations at the farmer's table. In nothing is there a more marked change than in the various processes of the harvest-I sometimes think that the greater portion of fields. the romance of the haymaking has disappeared. It is very marked in Adam Bede. Here is a picture of " All an annual reality as it relates to the hayfield. hands were to be out in the meadow as soon as the dew had risen; the wives and daughters did double work in every farm-house that the maids might give their help in tossing the hay; and when Adam was marching along the lanes with his basket of tools over his shoulder, he caught the sound of jocose talk and ringing laughter from behind the hedges." There are some fine touches in this picture and the whole description is true to life. The hay-making was a time of most genuine enthusiasm and merry-heartedness. Our author tells us that men's muscles move better when their souls are making merry music, and that their merriment mingles prettily with other joyous sounds of nature. Machinery has modified all this And, doubtless, it is well; for very considerably. with the exodus to the towns of so much of the bone and muscle of the country districts, our harvests could not be garnered now without resort to machinery. Yet with what pleasantness do I recall the recollections of

hav-time when I was a boy. How well I remember seeing my own father, the leader of seven mowers, in one of our fine meadows, when probably I would be six years old. All kept time in their swathes, stroke by stroke, the swish and rhythm of the sweeps were pleasant to listen to, and have left their distinct memory after all these years. I suppose there is music in the click of the mowing machine, but it can never be so romantic to me as the sound of seven mowers all at once sharpening their scythes, and then, in unison, cutting down the grass. A gang of tedders would follow the mowers, and what with the succeeding processes of turning, breaking, rowing, making into cocks and shaking out again, the grass had no rest until it was converted into sweet-smelling hav. Then the barns were filled and the stacks rose high amid much rejoicing. The joy of hay-making would sometimes be interrupted by spells of showery weather, which diminished the value of the product and increased the cost of gathering it in.

In the twentieth chapter of Adam Bede there is a lively picture of an evening visit to the Hall Farm by Adam in the hay-time, his heart full of projects for the future when his life is blent in matrimony, as he hopes it will be one day, with the life of Hetty Sorrell. The house is deserted it seems, for Mrs. Poyser is in the dairy where she and Nancy are crushing the curd of the first evening cheese, while Hetty and Totty are in the garden gathering currants. Soon the hay-makers return from the meadow and the "house-place" is no longer silent. Nothing in Adam Bede is more true to life than the scene here depicted. The supper is laid, and Molly goes down to draw beer for the thirsty harvest-

ers, and after a while reappears "carrying a large jug, two small mugs, and four drinking cans." The sight of the girl so laden elicited a sharp reproof from Mrs.



GRAVESTONE IN NORBURY CHURCHYARD OF SAMUEL GREEN, SON-IN-LAW OF GEORGE EVANS (THIAS BEDE).

Poyser, which, joined to the loud reverberations of thunder and the accidental loosening of Molly's apron, caused a sad fall, and the poor girl lay sprawling in a pool of beer. Now a much more severe scolding from the mistress falls upon her dull ears, and

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Molly begins to cry, as Mrs. Poyser bewails her precious crockery and scolds Molly for her awkwardness. "Ah," she says, "you'll do no good crying and making more wet to wipe up. It's all your own wilfulness, as I tell you, for there's no call to break anything if they'll only go the right way to work. But wooden folks had need ha' wooden things to handle. And here must I take the brown and white jug, as it's niver been used three times this year, and go down i' the cellar myself, and belike catch my death and be laid up with inflammation." As she lays hands on that precious jug a shock is administered to Mrs. Poyser, her jug falls to the ground minus spout and handle. And now we see in the smart sophistry of Mrs. Poyser, how our judgment of accidents may be varied by the consideration as to whether they happen to ourselves or to other people. We saw where the fault lay when poor wooden Molly broke the pitcher-how quickly the judgment is varied now that Mrs. Poyser has sustained a similar mishap. "Did ever anybody see the like?" she says. "The jugs are bewitched, I think. It's them nasty glazed handles, they slip o'er the finger like a snail."

"Why thee'st let thy own whip fly i' thy face," said Mr. Poyser.

"It's all very fine to look on and grin," rejoined Mrs. Poyser, "but there's times when the crockery seems alive and flies out o' your hand like a bird. It's like the glass, sometimes, 'ull crack as it stands. What is to be broke will be broke, for I niver dropped a thing i' my life for want o' holding it, else I should never ha' kept the crockery all these years as I bought at my wedding." Mrs. Poyser has ceased to scold poor Molly, she exhibits no consciousness of her undue cen-

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sure in respect of the servant, and her indulgent partiality in her judgment on herself. Hetty appears on the scene and makes a diversion, raising a merry laugh in which all heartily join save Mrs. Poyser, who, under cover of the prevailing amusement, glides out into the back kitchen to send Nancy into the cellar with the great pewter measure, which had some chance of being free from bewitchment. The ale soon appears on the table and Adam Bede has to give his opinion of the new tap, which, we are told, could not be otherwise than complimentary to Mrs. Poyser. Here we have indicated another custom of the olden time-the farmers brewing their own ale for the harvest season, instead of ordering it from the brewer. The whole scene is full of suggestion. It is electric at every point. Nothing seems wanting to the perfect picture. Three things are conspicuous in it. There is first a wonderfully comprehensive presentation of farm life in the days of Adam Bede; there is a scene charged full to the brim with piquant humour, and there is a moral lesson we all of us need to learn.

Later on in the story of Adam Bede we find a graphic description of a harvest supper. The Harvest Home is an old institution in the days of merry England. I do not think it is so common as it used to be. Probably the custom of a harvest thanksgiving service at the church has taken the place largely of the old Harvest Home at each separate farm. The ancient institution had about it an air of great familiarity : for the time distinctions were levelled, employer and employed feasted together and all were merry in common joy. The last load from the harvest fields was brought to the stack-yard in triumph, there was even some ceremony in its progress with minstrelsy and dancing. In the evening the harvest supper is laid, the farmer, his family and friends all gather at the table, while a place is found for everyone who has contributed to the harvest toil.

> "Well on, brave boys, to your lord's hearth Glitt'ring with fire, where, for your mirth, You shall see first the lord and cheefe Foundation of your feast, fat beefe: With upper stories, mutton, veale, And bacon, which makes full the meale, With sev'ral dishes standing by, As here a custard, there a pie, And there all tempting frumentie. And for to make the merrie cheere If smirking wine be wanting here There's that which drowns all care—strong beere."

All this is true, and much more also, in respect of the Harvest Home supper described in the fifty-third chapter of *Adam Bede*. With our modern experiences we may question the virtues of strong "beere," but the poet wrote in days of long ago. Our hero, as he was going homewards after a day's honest toil. hears the Harvest Home chant rising and sinking like a wave. The evening is beautiful, the sun is declining to the west, and Adam falls to moralising thus : "It's wonderful how that sound goes to one's heart, almost like a funeral bell, for all it tells of the joyfullest time of the year, and the time when men are mostly the thankfullest. I suppose it's a bit hard to think anything's over and gone in our lives, and there's a parting at the root of all our joys."

When Adam reaches the Hall Farm the supper has commenced, but a place has been kept for him as an expected guest. His old schoolmaster, too, Bartle Massey, is there, and Mr. Craig as well. The labourers,

too, are honoured guests along with these friendly neighbours. For once they have a recognised place of equality and friendship with those above them in the social scale, and they are prepared to enjoy their feast to the full. One of the noblest passages the hand of George Eliot ever penned occurs in her description of the company at this feast. She tells of one of the farm workmen who had begun his career on the farm as a boy by scaring birds, and had grown old in its service. After her sketch of the old thatcher's peculiarities she writes : "I am not ashamed of commemorating old Kester; you and I are indebted to the hard hands of such men-hands that have long ago mingled with the soil they tilled so faithfully, thriftily making the best they could of the earth's fruits, and receiving the smallest share as their own wages." This sentence is characteristic of George Eliot. She looks into the soul of things and in her heart keenly realises the noble services and hard lot of the toilers among the poor. The bountiful supper is despatched, the cloth is removed, and then our author lets us see the bacchanalian part of the proceedings. She evidently thinks this portion of the feast open to serious objection, but then she interjects the thought that we have no power to reform our forefathers. The harvest supper comes down to us from time immemorial, and the song for such occasions is also ancient. There are several versions extant. Of the one employed at the Hall Farm feast George Eliot gives us three stanzas. There is not much to be said for the poetry or the rhyme. Probably that did not matter. There was, at least for the time being, a considerable amount of good feeling. The harvest song, we are told, was sung " decidedly forte ":

Here's a health unto our master, The founder of the feast; Here's a health unto our master And to our mistress!

When the chorus is reached after the third quatrain, the shepherd's can is filled with ale, and he must empty it without spilling before the chorus has ceased, under the penalty of drinking a second portion. The same process is gone through with each worker in turn, and we are told that one of them spilled a portion of his allowance in order that there might be inflicted upon him the penalty of imbibing a second. The chorus reads thus :

> Then drink, boys, drink! And see ye do not spill, For if ye do, ye shall drink two, For 'tis your master's will.

I have found elsewhere a somewhat better version of the old harvest song, which runs as follows :

> Here's a health to our master, The lord of the feast; God bless his endeavours. And send him increase! May prosper his crops, boys, And we reap next year; Here's our master's good health, boys, Come, drink off your beer ! Now harvest is ended, And supper is past; Here's our mistress's health, boys, Come, drink a full glass. For she's a good woman, Provides us good cheer, Here's your mistress's good health, boys, Come, drink off your beer.

In some future generation the historical antiquary will find in Adam Bede a repertory of information on

the manners and customs of village life in the early years of the nineteenth century, which will stand him in good stead. He will there find a faithful record of a condition of things which has already passed away. He will discover that no painter or poet, no balladmaker nor historian has left on record so complete and life-like a picture as the writer of this story. I have read it many times over, always with deepening wonder at its comprehensiveness, minuteness, freshness When I consider for a moment how I and force. should have fared with such a task, I am astonished beyond measure at the power of a mind which could follow out into so much detail, with such unfailing accuracy, the drama of daily life in a village community and invest the common-place, humdrum existence of men and women there, with such undying charm, and unflagging interest. It is only the loftiest genius which could perform such a miracle. It is, perhaps, not particularly edifying to read of the roystering festivities of the harvest sup-Bartle Massey retires from the room per. during the loud, musical chorus, lest the unharmonious shout should split his ears. But even that supper, ordinary as it may appear, has associated with it outbursts of satire, wit, pleasantry and humour which would render any conceivable scene immortal. There is one rencontre on this memorable occasion, between Bartle Massey and Mrs. Poyser, recording coruscations of wit, which cannot but astonish and delight Here, it is diamond cut diathe most stolid reader. mond, but at least one may say that Mrs. Poyser does not come off second best. Bartle Massey, the caustic critic of women, has for a wonder been saying something rather kindly of one exceptional woman-Dinah

Morris, and this is how he excuses himself for this amiable weakness : "I meant her voice, man-I meant her voice, that was all, I can bear to hear her speak without wanting to put wool in my ears. As for other things, I daresay she's like the rest of the women, thinks two and two 'ull come to make five, if she cries and bothers enough about it."

"Ay, ay"! said Mrs. Poyser "one 'ud think, an' hear some folks talk, as the men war cute enough to count the corns in a bag o' wheat wi' only smelling at it. They can see through a barn door, they can. Perhaps that's the reason they can see so little o' this side on't."

"Ah !" said Bartle, sneeringly, "the women are quick enough, they're quick enough. They know the rights of a story before they hear it, and can tell a man what his thoughts are before he knows 'em himself." "Like enough," said Mrs. Poyser, "for the men

are mostly so slow their thoughts o'errun 'em, an' they can only catch 'em by the tail. I can count a stocking top while a man gets his tongue ready, an' when he outs wi' his speech at last, there's little broth to be made on't. It's dead chicks take the longest hatching. Howiver, I'm not denying the women are foolish : God Almighty made 'em to match the men."

"Match !" said Bartle, "ay, as vinegar matches one's teeth. If a man says a word his wife'll match it with a contradiction, if he's a mind for hot meat his wife'll match it with cold bacon, if he laughs she'll match him with whimpering. She's such a match as the horse-fly is to the horse, she's got the right venom to sting him with, the right venom to sting him with." "Yes," said Mrs. Poyser, "I know what the men

like-a poor soft, as 'ud simper at 'em like the pictur

o' the sun, whether they did right or wrong, and say thank you for a kick, an' pretend she didna know what end she stood uppermost till her husband told her.''

Here Mr. Poyser joins in the conversation, and after another satirical speech by Bartle Massev. appeals to his wife, saying : "What dost say to that?"

"Say!" answered Mrs. Poyser with dangerous fire kindling in her eye. "why, I say as some folks' tongues are like the clocks as run on striking, not to tell you the time o' day, but because there's summat wrong i' their own insides."

This is the climax of the sparkling dialogue, which it might not have been, but for a boisterous outburst of inharmonious melody among the workmen, followed by the song : "Three Merry Mowers," lustily sung by Tim.

We would have to travel very far before we found more pungent wit than that which we discover in Chapter LIII. of Adam Bede. It also enables us to recall rural life in a generation which has long since passed away. I do not marvel at Sir Leslie's judgment that this wonderful story placed George Eliot in the first rank of Victorian novelists, and that Mrs. Poyser became at once one of the immortals, taking rank with Sam Weller as "one of the irresistible humorists." Nor do I quite wonder at the enthusiasm with which Miss Betham-Edwards speaks of the She says of George Eliot "that on account author. of her great gifts and despite her numerous adorers, she always seemed to me alone, sadly, almost sublimely alone." In view of this great book I think we may heartily endorse the judgment of another competent critic who savs : "What Dickens was to the

crowd George Eliot has been to the elect. An earnest and serious moral and spiritual enthusiast, the most cultivated of scholars, the most conscientious of artists, with an almost terrible sense of responsibility entrusted to her in these gifts, she raised pure fiction to a higher plane than it had ever aspired to before, and if her influence has been more or less esoteric, it has been of incalculable importance to art and life." Of Adam Bede, that keen and competent critic, the late Mr. R. H. Hutton, said that it was a wonderful book, always likely to remain George Eliot's most popular book. This judgment seems to be in the way of fulfilment. Henry Morley says of her books in general that they will cloud no true faith, and are works of rare genius. Surely their tendency is

> "To wake the soul by tender strokes of art, To raise the genius and to mend the heart; To make mankind in conscious virtue bold, Live o'er each scene and be what they behold."

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CHAPTER VII

SETH BEDE'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF

"I need a cleansing change within: My life must once again begin; New hope I need and youth renewed, And more than human fortitude;
New faith, new love and strength to cast Away the fetters of the past."

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

LET us turn our thoughts once more to the old house at Roston Common, with the workshop at the south end, the house where Adam Bede was born in 1773 and Seth Bede four years later. Let us think of Seth as now eighteen years old, and as having, like his elder brothers, passed through Bartle Massey's academy and as now far advanced in the practice of his father's laborious calling. By this time the eldest son had left the paternal home and gone to live in Rocester. The second son, William, has fixed his abode in Castle Donnington. Thomas, Robert (Adam Bede), and Samuel (Seth Bede) are still at home. The father is now sixty years of age, and the bulk of the business falls on his capable sons, of whom he was very proud. Sometimes he was twitted with the superior workmanship of his sons, and his reply was : "Who taught them?" Seth was said to have been the spoiled son

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of his mother, but his sister, my grandmother, used to say that so far from his being spoiled by his mother, he was her true instructor and comforter in her last illness. The family gravestone shows that she died in 1803. By this time a great change had taken place in the life of Seth Bede. He shall tell the story in his



SCHOOL ADJOINING BARTLE MASSEY'S HOUSE, NEAR NORBURY AND ROSTON COMMON.

"Bartle Massey's was one of a few scattered houses on the edge of a common which was divided by the road to Treddlestone."

own words. I have an autobiography which was written at his dictation when he was an old man. There is in it a preface entirely characteristic of the humility which always distinguished Seth Bede.

"At the request of my dear children and friends I consent for a short sketch of my life to be put into writing, although I do not know what can be said, only that, after all, I am an

unprofitable servant. I can speak largely on the goodness of God to me and of His mercies and deliverances through my past life, but—

'I loathe myself when God I see, And into nothing fall; Content if Thou exalted be, And Christ be all in all.'"

Humility, gentleness, and patience were conspicuous qualities in the character of Seth Bede. He says-

"I was born at Roston in the parish of Norbury, Derbyshire, and by trade I am a joiner. I attended the church regularly along with the rest of the family; I was very dark and ignorant as regards divine truths, which was not to be wondered at, for our parish minister was not an evangelical one, but was fond of hunting, shooting, playing at cards and the like pleasures of a worldly nature, shocking to say."

Let me pause here to acknowledge with deep thankfulness to God the marked change in the piety and zeal of the country clergy during the more than one hundred years which have elapsed since Seth Bede was eighteen years old. The hunting parson has not entirely died out, and yet he is all but extinct. Still he was common enough in Seth Bede's early days, and, indeed, in mine also. One of the entertaining sights which frequently broke the monotony of village life when I was a boy was the periodical appearance of the hounds followed by a company of mounted men dressed in red jackets, and among them one or more clergymen. The late Lord Bishop of Liverpool, in a very noble book, entitled Christian Leaders of the Last Century (the eighteenth) gives a faithful picture of the clergy of the period. Speaking of the persecutions inflicted on that true servant of God, William Grimshaw, vicar of Haworth, and friend of Wesley, for his evangelistic zeal in Yorkshire, he says :



ROBERT EVANS (ADAM BEDE). From a miniature in the possession of his Grandson.



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CALIECENIA

"There is something revolting in the idea of a holy and zealous minister of the Church of England being persecuted for overstepping the bounds of ecclesiastical etiquette, while hundreds of clergymen were let alone and undisturbed whose lives and doctrines were beneath contempt. All over England country livings were often filled by hunting. shooting, gambling, drinking, card-playing, swearing, ignorant clergymen, who cared neither for law nor gospel, and utterly neglected their parishes. When they did preach they either preached to empty benches, or else the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed. And yet these men lived under their own vine and fig trees, enjoying great quietness, untouched by bishops, eating the fat of the land and calling themselves the true supporters of the Church."

This exactly agrees with what Seth Bede tells us of the condition of things in his native Derbyshire. As he has told us of his spiritual darkness, we will now let him relate to us the manner of his awakening.

"When I was eighteen I heard of a travelling preacher, Mr. William Hicks, who preached at Snelstone. Methodists were not looked upon in those days as they are now-they were considered fanatical enthusiasts. My curiosity was very much aroused, hearing that Mr. Hicks preached and prayed without a book; which I considered a very marvellous thing. I felt determined to go and hear him. I went, and while he was praying the first time conviction seized me. I was in great distress of mind, the weight of my sins was more than I could I thought I was the worst and vilest sinner in the bear. place, and so exceedingly ignorant was I, that I could not imagine what was the matter with me. I might take up the language of the Psalmist and say 'I was as a beast before Thee.' When Mr. Hicks began to preach I thought someone must have told him my state, as every word was meant for me. I continued in that state of mind six weeks; the anguish of soul I endured in that time was only known to God and myself. At the end of six weeks I was praying alone in my room before I went to work. The Lord in great mercy broke in upon my soul, pardoned my sins and made me happy in His I felt peace and joy through believing." love.

It is worth while to pause here and ask ourselves by what influence this extraordinary revolution was

brought about? Under the ministration of an extempore prayer, offered by a stranger whom he had never seen before, all in a moment there comes to the soul of this simple country youth a self revelation which



WESLEYAN CHAPEL, ROSTON, NORBURY. Referred to in Samuel Evans' (Seth Bede) memoirs.

startles and appals him. Outwardly no one could have been more orderly in conduct than he—

> "A son that never did amiss, That never shamed his mother's kiss, Or crossed her fondest prayer."

Yet now he feels himself the vilest sinner in the place. What is it that has wrought this sudden

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change? He has been drawn to the place by curiosity, gripped by instantaneous spiritual force which he can by no means account for, and yet it has completely mastered him. It was not logic, for no proposition had been advanced; it was not persuasion, for the messenger had not begun to plead. True he had heard the strains of a hymn before he had listened to the prayer, but what of that? He had heard singing often enough at the parish church without being perturbed by it, and even on this occasion the singing seems to have made slight impression. The prayer, however, arrested him, and then the sermon transfixed him. All things are different now. The placid and contented Seth, so dear to his devoted mother, is plunged into poignant and self-reproaching distress. The anxious mother can come to no other conclusion than that her darling son has gone mad. As for him, a piercing searchlight has been turned on his inner life, and there is a new and vivid revelation of himself. His own artless description reminds me of what St. Augustine has said of himself in his Confessions: "Thou, O Lord, while he (Pontitianus) was speaking, didst turn me round towards myself, taking me from behind my back where he had placed me, unwilling to observe myself; and setting me before my face that I might see how foul I was, how crooked and defiled, bespotted and ulcerous. I beheld and stood aghast; and whither to flee from myself I found not."

But, sudden as had been the keen dart of conviction in Seth Bede's case, equally sudden was the inflowing of joy. Every day he rises early to go to his work, but earlier still for his morning cry to God out of the sorrows of a troubled mind. "Then," says he, "the light broke in upon my soul." Whence this visitation

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came he never had a doubt. To him it was all divine.

- Seth Bede had the full realisation of that for which poor Hartley Coleridge prayed in the lines at the head of this chapter. There was in intensest reality a new beginning of life. There was first that astounding revelation of himself to himself, which had so bitterly confounded and distressed him, and then there was that still small voice that spoke to him early in the morning, by which he was assured of cleansing and peace.

Into the closest relationship with God has Seth Bede now consciously entered, and for him it is the beginning of a new and happy life. At Snelstone which was the next village to Norbury and Roston Common, there lived a well-to-do farmer of the name of Beres-This gentleman was a Methodist class-leader ford. and local preacher, and had built a preaching-room on his own premises. Seth Bede writes of him as "a very precious man of God." To him Seth went and related his new experiences, and was at once received into the Methodist Society. Four years passed by. and there came another development. These were evidently years of spiritual growth, steady progress, and deepening joy to the young convert-

"I met with Mr. Beresford four years, and only missed once in the time, although the meeting-place was a mile from Roston, where I lived. I often had to go four miles to work, and then after that a mile to my class. Very often since I have wished that my members had evinced the same love for their class that I did for mine."

It was manifestly very exhilarating for the aged Seth to look back on the early years of his spiritual pilgrimage, and the memory of Mr. Beresford, after the lapse of sixty years, was to him both fragrant and

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inspiring. But a tragic event severed the connection of the leader and his disciple. Mr. Beresford was one day thrown from his horse, the neck was dislocated, and the good man died. Not, however, before he had time to send for Seth Bede, who was astonished to be-



THORNTREE FARM, SNELSTONE. Home of Mrs. Gough, niece of Samuel Evans (Seth Bede). Mrs. Gough is claimed by some as the original of Mrs. Poyser.

hold with what calm peace and holy triumph his dying class-leader could meet the unexpected death which had so abruptly overtaken him. When the country was ringing with slanders concerning the Methodists, their great founder claimed for them this characteristic : "They die well." Nothing could be more true, but in reality it was because they had learned to live well. And so it was that Mr. Beresford could meet

his awfully sudden death with such rapturous assurance and holy peace. The untoward event nevertheless was one of keen sorrow to Seth Bede. What could be more natural than that he should unbosom his grief to his former pastor, the Rev. W. Hicks, now removed to the Burton-on Trent circuit? This good minister replied that it might be that God had taken away the first to establish the second. Indeed, this is what came of it, for Seth, at the age of twenty-two, was chosen leader of the class, and appointed a local preacher in the place of Mr. Beresford, and I am entitled to say also that for the long period of fifty-nine years he was one of the most laborious, self-sacrificing and consecrated class-leaders and local preachers that the great Methodist denomination has ever numbered in its ranks. His autobiography tells us of keen spiritual struggles, wrestlings of deep agony, and assuring triumphs of spiritual power; of rising at three or four o'clock in the morning for reading, study and prayer, of dreams and visions in the night, and of souls quickened to a new life by his efforts, which apparently is the sanction and reward of his toil.

It was, however, not all plain sailing. There were two elder brothers still at home, and the following extract will show how they regarded the irregularities of Seth :

"My clder brothers Robert and Thomas teased me. They told me I made blunders both in preaching and prayer, and that I had more zeal than knowledge. I dare say I had. They were High Church in their sympathies and despised the Methodists, and tried hard to argue, to baffle and confound me. I betook myself to prayer, the Lord enlightened my understanding; I became familiar with Scripture, and was able to give every man a reason for the hope that was in me. My brothers and I often talked about these things in after life when we occasionally met together."

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That simple touch concerning the conversations in after years is beautifully suggestive. They all lived to be old men. I happen to know that though life had sundered them apart for many years, yet they did occasionally meet, and were exceedingly united and happy with each other. Of this we are sure, Seth



FARMHOUSE AT SNELSTONE, CONTAINING A PORTION OF THE WALLS OF A DISMANTLED WESLEYAN CHAPEL.

Mentioned by Samuel and Elizabeth Evans (Seth Be le and Dinah Morris) in their memoirs.

never repented his early choice, and I have good reason to believe that all the brothers had come to realise that for him it was the best he could have made. Independently of church relationships, all the brothers my own grandmother also, as their sister—were really proud of the consistent piety, simple faith and self-

sacrificing goodness of Seth Bede, long years before any individual had conceived that his fragrant memory would one day be embalmed in the pages of immortal fiction. What is it that decides the different beliefs of children all brought up under the same influences at home? Here, in a remote hamlet in Derbyshire, are five sons, all of them trained to attend the parish church, to recite the Church Catechism, to reverence the clergyman, to go forward for confirmation, and to start life as reverent Churchmen. The first died early, but not before he had become a convert of the Methodists; the second became a Baptist; the third and fourth remained to the end of life staunch Churchmen, while the youngest son, to the close of a long career, was a devoted Methodist. All were good men, and, in spite of religious differences, maintained to old age true fraternal friendship and unbroken family The Methodist cause at Snelstone has fared unity. ill. From Mr. Beresford's room it migrated to a chapel, which was built for it, to which a burial ground was attached. In process of years the cause declined, and the responsible trustee sold the building and the graveyard to the village squire. Some few of the bodies interred there were taken up and reinterred in the parish churchyard, but there is now no mark to indicate a burial ground, although many bodies remain in their original graves, and among them that of George, the eldest son of George and Mary Evans (Thias and Lisbeth Bede). One devout old woman, who was a member there, still survives. She heard it said that the chief authority of the village gave it to be understood that there must be no more preaching in Snelstone. That view has been confirmed by other testimony. She remembers

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Showing amongst the names those of Samuel Evans (Seth Bede) and Elizabeth Evans (Dinah Morris). PAGE FROM SAMUEL EVANS' (SETH DEDE) CLASS BOOK;



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well the visits of Dinah Morris to Snelstone when she herself was a servant to Mrs. Gough, a farmer's wife, said by some writers to have been the prototype of Mrs. Poyser. This lady was a cousin of George Eliot. The servant went to Ellastone to hear Dinah Morris preach while she was visiting Mrs. Gough, the chapel at Snelstone being by this time converted into a farmhouse. I am sorry that the Society of Methodists which Seth Bede first joined has ceased to exist, while the other he mentions as existing at Roston still survives. He writes about them with loving enthusiasm in his old age :

"I was sure I was in my right place, for the Lord gave me souls for my hire and seals for my ministry. I found it very profitable to read the Word of God upon my knees. The Lord was very pitiful and kind. He enlightened my understanding. Very shortly I was entered on full plan with the rest of my brethren. I am now nearly eighty, and my name is still on the preaching plan. I can say: 'Hitherto the Lord hath helped me.' I feel thankful to God that I can preach a full and free salvation to a lost and ruined race. O, how free it is, and how reasonable its terms if people would but give up their sins and make their calling and election sure. I was very fond of the people I laboured amongst at Roston and Snelstone. We were all of one heart and soul, which is very delightful. Would to God it were always o!'

All this while Seth Bede was toiling at his calling of carpenter and joiner. We have Adam's own clear testimony of his industry and capacity as a workman; his labours are exacting and his hours long, yet he finds time to study well his Bible, his Concordance and Bible dictionary; he ministers to the needs of many, and is a helper of their joy. I can scarcely imagine any experience in life happier than Seth's. With gcod health and abounding strength for labour, a life fired with high enthusiasm, talents consecrated to Christian

service, the humble joiner is one of the happiest of men. His sphere is limited, I know, his advantages for acquiring knowledge are but few; nevertheless, he has learned early in his career the true secret of rest, and his life is one of the purest content and the sweetest satisfaction even to its closing hours.

A recent biographer of George Eliot has said : "Seth Bede bores me." But then, he only knows the Seth Bede of fiction, where Seth is continually subordinated to Adam, if not more or less sacrificed. The supposed needs of dramatic presentation modified the relative positions of the two brothers, and in this way Seth has been overshadowed. In these chapters we are telling a real-life story, and in this narration Seth will appear as one of the truest and strongest of men. On my last visit to Wirksworth a gentleman remarked to me: "I consider Seth Bede was one of the best benefactors our town has ever had. He brought a new industry into the parish which has flourished for the greater part of a century and given employment to many hundreds of persons, and is flourishing to-day." This is a true witness. Its justification will appear as we proceed with our recital. Meanwhile, we must turn aside from Seth for awhile to deal with Dinah Morris. To me this character is the principal charm in the novel of Adam Bede.

CHAPTER VIII

DINAH MORRIS PREACHING ON THE GREEN AT HAYSLOPE '

"She taught us how to live; With blameless life girt round with sanctity, Lowly in heart, in soul and purpose high. Sweet lessons did she give Of faith, of love, of hope; for all that shone Brightest in Christian lives, she made her own." BURLEIGH.

FEW of the pictures presented in fiction more indelibly impress themselves on the reader's mind than the preaching of Dinah Morris on Hayslope Green. The scene is so picturesque, with just a dash of the marvellous thrown in; the youth and sex of the preacher, the calm of the summer evening, the gathering of the simple villagers, the stranger listening on horseback spellbound by the preaching—all these join to produce a situation which cannot well be forgotten. One can almost hear the solemn tones of the hymn rising on the evening air, and we seem to watch the mounted traveller as he goes forward on his way.

I have conversed with many hundreds of the readers of *Adam Bede*, and, without exception, I find that the scene delineated in Chapter II. has been remembered with striking vividness. It is to this narrative we must turn in introducing Dinah Morris.

In a general way, but without finding exact correspondence in every particular, we may take it that the village of Ellastone answers to the Hayslope of the novel. The traveller on horseback, with portmanteau strapped behind him, may well be supposed to have approached the village by the steep incline which marks the arrival from Ashbourne, and as he drew near, he may have caught a glimpse of Wootton Hall on his right, in the midst of hanging woods far up the valley, he may have passed on his way after the preaching down the gentle slope on his journey to Rocester and Uttoxeter.

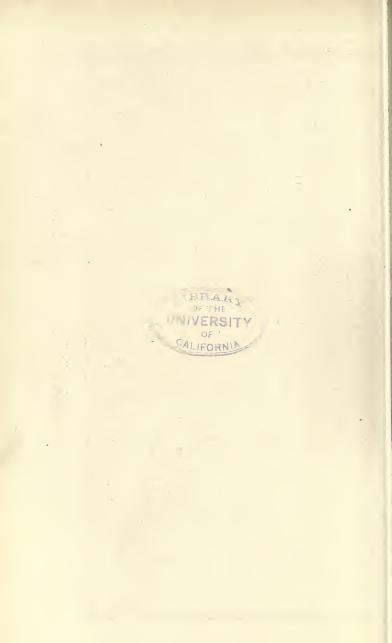
The Ellastone of 1799 was not very different from the Ellastone of the twentieth century. A few new houses have been built, thatched roofs have given place to Staffordshire tiles, the reads are much improved, but the place, always beautiful, remains much as it was a hundred years ago. It stands in the midst of a pleasantly diversified landscape, in which there are blended green pastures, rich meadows, furrowed comfields, fruitful orchards, and shady plantations; with Weaver Hills standing sentinel on the north, "to guard this region of corn and grass" from the hungry winds which blow from that quarter; while the valley of the Dove, with the low hills of the Derbyshire border at Norbury and Roston, bound the vision to the south.

The village of Ellastone has other literary and art associations than those of Adam Bede, for Jean Jaques Rousseau resided for a year at Wootton Hall; George Frederick Handel composed part of his great Oratorio, The Messiah, at Calwich Abbey : and Archbishop Sheldon was born in the parish.



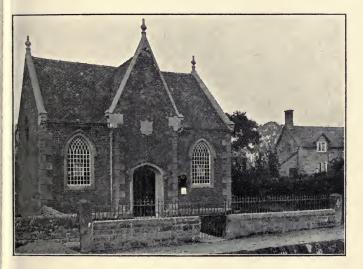
GENERAL VIEW OF ELLASTONE (HAYSLOPE)

"The Green lay at the extremity of the village, and from it the road branched off in two directions, one leading farther up the hill by the church, the other winding gently down towards the valley." "A region". . . . where at every turn . . . some grey steeple looked out from a pretty confusion of trees and thatch and dark-red tiles." Adam Bede, Chap. ii.



DINAH MORRIS PREACHING AT HAYSLOPE 127

Ellastone is a wide parish of more than seven thousand acres, and includes the five townships of Calwich, Prestwood, Ramsor, Stanton, and Wootton, containing together a population of twelve hundred souls. The Parish Church of St. Peter occupies a prominent position on rising ground, and the vicarage commands delightful views across the valley to the wooded heights



WESLEYAN CHAPEL, ELLASTONE (HAYSLOPE).

of Derbyshire. A painter residing here would find around him charming landscapes for his canvas, and in the picturesque valleys of both the Churnet and the Dove he would discover varying scenes of choicest beauty. Alas, the village green has long since disappeared. I doubt not that it once occupied the ground opposite the Bromley Arms Inn. I can trace

the old boundary of it in part, while traditions of it linger among the villagers. One could have wished that the green and the maple tree which figure in the novel had been allowed to remain, but like some other things—the parish stocks and the parish pound, for example—they are not as they were.

The question for us to consider is whether Dinah Morris did preach at Ellastone or not. On this point I can furnish the very best testimony. On one of my journeys to Staffordshire my mother informed me of a retired builder residing at Ashbourne, who had heard Dinah Morris preach on the green at Ellastone. Mr. Phillips was a hale old man, a good Methodist, with a clear brain and a lively memory. I had a pleasant interview with him. His description of the scene was vivid and telling. He recalled it with sparkling enthusiasm. When he heard the preaching he was a youthful apprentice in the building-yard originated in Ellastone by Adam Bede. Dinah's preaching produced an impression on his mind which it was delightful for him to recall. His eyes moistened and his voice mellowed as I asked him the question : "Do you remember her as a woman who preached with remarkable power?" The ready and energetic reply was : "I felt the power in my own soul, and never can forget it. It penetrated me through and through. I shall bless God to all eternity that I ever heard her voice."

There is other testimony as well. It is found in the autobiography of Seth Bede. He tells of a series of meetings in the open-air during a summer period. Then came the autumn chills and rains. One Sunday evening Dinah was preaching while a shower of rain was falling. The meeting was held in the immediate

DINAH MORRIS PREACHING AT HAYSLOPE 129

vicinity of the inn, a statement agreeing with other evidence as to the site of the green. The Methodists did not think the landlord likely to be favourable towards their meetings, but certainly he must have been a kind-hearted man, for he surprised and delighted them by walking across the read to their gathering to



THE VICARAGE, ELLASTONE (HAYSLOPE)

make them an offer of the use of his spacious clubroom, where the meetings were continued for the winter season.

Another question, however, remains. Were these facts about the preaching of Dinah Morris at Ellastone known to George Eliot? About this I have not a doubt. Of course, there were other places, and, in-10 deed, many of them, where Dinah preached in the open-air. But, to begin with, George Eliot knew Ellastone well. She tells of her visits to her father's brother William at this place, of whom she speaks as a rich builder. I have already referred to her visit to Wirksworth, and of a long afternoon spent in the parlour of her cousin, Mrs. Walker, writing down from the lips of her aunt, Dinah Morris, the account of her preaching experiences.

Mrs. Walker told me very definitely of the saying of the latter: "I have been giving to your cousin an account of my preaching in the open air at Ellastone, and she wants to write it all down." 'The tête-à-tête of the two, on that occasion, occupied a period of three It has an important bearing on the preaching hours. at Hayslope. I do not wish my readers to suppose that all the incidents related of the preaching there are to be taken as historical. That would be to allow no play for the imagination of the author. It is quite enough to know that she was aware of this ministration on the part of Dinah, and this being taken as established, we may realise for ourselves that it was hers, as a writer of fiction, to clothe the bare incident with the drapery appropriate to its dramatic presentation, and thus we owe it to her rare genius for realistic description that we have this fascinating scene which has become so famous in literary craftsmanship.

The attitude of mind and heart of the writer at the time when she came into close contact with Dinah Morris is sufficiently attested to enable us to realise it very clearly. She was then a devout and earnest Christian woman, full of faith and good works. An extract from one of her letters to Seth Bede will reveal all this to us more fully than any words of mine.



PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PETER, ELLASTONE (HAYSLOPE).

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She is writing of Dinah Morris at a time when the beloved aunt lay dangerously ill at Wirksworth. The letter reveals a decided Christian experience and an exultant spiritual faith. A recent writer on George Eliot with keen penetration has stated that when she appeared as a novelist the multitude of her readers perceived at once that she knew the secrets of the spiritual life. The religion of the heart, says this very competent critic, cannot be feigned. This is the great peculiarity of George Eliot's position. Whatever may have been her ultimate fate, she was assuredly of those who were once enlightened, who tasted of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come. All this is substantiated to the full by the choice extract I am about to give. It is dated :

Griff House, Aug. 10, 1840.

MY DEAR UNCLE,

"Remembering the apostle's declaration that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, I cannot, for her own sake, regret that my dear aunt is so very near the brink of Jordan. I would only pray that her Heavenly Father may, out of His tender consideration for His creatures who are but dust, lighten the weight of bodily suffering as far as may consist with His designs of mercy to the soul. Give my dear aunt, if she be able to receive it, an assurance from me of my affection for her, and tell her I humbly resolve in the strength of the Lord to seek His face evermore, that we may sing together a new song before the throne. For you, my dear uncle, both my father and myself truly feel, and I have endeavoured to pray that you may be powerfully sustained under a trial that will indeed bereave you of one who has been as the apple of your eye; but is it not to this end, that God may be all in all with you, and that having no earthly prop you may walk entirely by faith? I doubt not, my dear uncle, that you will evidence the possession of what belongs only to the Christian—joy in tribulation—and that you will thus glorify the God of Israel even in the fires. Truly the commandments of God are not grievous, for the Apostle

sums them up by a 'Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice'; and though this may seem a great difficulty when the heart is bowed down and rent in twain by the loss of our earthly gourds, in reality that is the very time when we can best relish the waters that make glad the city of God.' 'Trials make the promise sweet'—such promises as these: 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit on mv throne.' 'The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them.' 'And God shall wipe all tears away from their eyes.'"

When George Eliot wrote this letter she was twenty years of age. She was in the midst of her busy life as housekeeper and dairywoman at Griff, she was pursuing her ardent intellectual studies, and engaging in active Christian work among the poor people around her. Before the aunt died, the blight of her faith had come to her, and she tells us there was mutual pain in their last interview.

After this illness Dinah Morris lived another nine years. It was in this period that I first heard of George Eliot. We, in Staffordshire, were told of her refusal to accompany her father to church, of her unbelief in the credibility of the Christian revelation, of the instrumentality of people who were Unitarians in bringing about this change, and, quite naturally, we thought hard things of a daughter who could give such agonising pain to so indulgent a father and so good a man as Adam Bede; and we did not think kindly of the people called Unitarians who could have succeeded in bringing about such a result. I am bound to say that, so far as I know, every one of her relations in Staffordshire and Derbyshire would be entirely out of harmony with George Eliot's surrender of faith, and, as I well remember, greatly marvelled that it should have taken place. I am sure it was a poignant

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grief to her aunt, Dinah Morris, who died in the same year that Adam Bede died, and also to Seth Bede, who lived nine years longer. But the intercourse with Wirksworth had now ceased, and she never visited her friends in that region again. Still, we can see from her book that she had not lost her warm affection for



CHAD CRANAGE'S FORGE (RECENTLY DEMOLISHED).

her aunt, for the portrait of Dinah, which was certainly suggested to her mind by the knowledge of her aunt, while wrought with consummate skill, is also done with warm affection and keen sympathy.

In the Ellastone preaching scene Dinah is introduced as a young unmarried woman from Stonyshire, visiting her relations at the Hall Farm, whose visit

the local Methodists took advantage of to arrange for the preaching on the green. This, however, is at variance with what actually occurred. The visitation of relatives may be removed from our consideration. She had no local connections whatever, but was induced to come over by Seth Bede, exclusively for the purposes of the preaching. Nevertheless, since Dinah did preach, as a young woman from Nottingham, in the town of Ashbourne, and was heard there by Seth Bede, it is most probable that her first appearance at Ellastone synchronised with her first visit to Ashbourne. Afterwards it was not as an unmarried spinster that Dinah preached there, but as a bride of some thirty years of age. The services on the village green, to which Seth Bede alludes as being continued all one summer season, and then transferred to the club-room, occurred after the preacher had come to reside at Norbury as a married woman.

We must not forget that, in reading Adam Bede, we are dealing with a work of fiction, and therefore the writer is entitled to present her narrative to us according to the demands of her literary art, and we have no ground of complaint that she has done so. Anyhow, the preaching did happen, Dinah Morris was the preacher, and she told the story of it to George Eliot in the summer of 1837, during one of her visits to Wirksworth.

The main features of the place as mentioned in the story are plainly visible to-day. We know where the village green was situated, the churchyard gates mentioned in the novel are close at hand, the Donnithorne Arms Inn is exactly opposite, and the club-room alluded to by Seth Bede is a long and spacious apartment for public gatherings extending over the stables of the



"High up against the horizon were the huge conical masses of hill, like giant mounds." Adam Bede, Chap, ii.



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inn, as is often the case with village inns of the olden time. The blacksmith's smithy, where we are told Chad Cranage stood gossiping with his neighbours, is just round the corner, in ruins now, because a more modern structure has taken its place. There is no maple tree to-day, whatever may have been the case a hundred years ago.

Speaking of the club-room, Seth Bede says : "We held meetings there for some time; now they have a comfortable chapel and a promising society, supplied by the Uttoxeter preachers. Praise the Lord for all His goodness." The little chapel stands with gabled front, facing the turnpike road, within sight of the spot where Dinah held her preaching. It has ministered to the spiritual needs of several generations of Methodists in Ellastone, and must ever be associated with the name of Dinah Morris.

Sir Leslie Stephen, in his recently published book on George Eliot, somewhat discounts the value of the portrait given us of Dinah in Adam Bede, because she is too good for him. He thinks perfect characters in fiction have a tendency to be insipid. This reminds me of the Johnsonian anecdote in which we are told of a lady hostess who boasted to the great doctor that she and her husband had lived together thirty-eight years, I think it was, without a quarrel. She expected commendation for such virtue, and was startled by the brusque answer : "Madam, how insipid !" It is a trifle sad when angelic goodness in a woman, whether in fiction or in real life, is set down for insipidity. "She is a little too good," says Sir Leslie, "not only for Seth, but for this world, and I have a difficulty in obeying the summons to fall upon my knees and worship." Of course, this relates to the Dinah of fiction merely. The real Dinah had no illusions about her native goodness, but always cherished the most humbling views of herself; she sought no homage while she lived, and took all the means within her power to secure that none should be given to her memory when she was dead. But, at least, we may produce here some extracts written by one who knew the living prototype of Dinah Morris for many years.

Mr. Adam Chadwick, a banker of Matlock Bath, said to me :

"The world does not yet know the real excellence of Dinah Morris. She far exceeded the presentation of her goodness in *Adam Bede*. I knew her intimately from my youth up till the time of her death, and I must sav that she was the most perfect character I have ever known. I have committed to writing my recollections of her; and, if I live long enough, I am resolved that the world shall know of her romantic career and of her beneficent labours in this district as long as strength and life were given to her."

The wish of this gentleman was not fulfilled. Very suddenly he was called hence, but his papers have been courteously handed to me, and will be freely drawn upon in the course of this history. Among other things he gives us Dinah Morris's dying confession, which shows that she, at least, did not think herself the "perfect character" Sir Leslie Stephen good-humouredly dissents from. It is most expressive :

"I do not repent of anything I have done in trying to snatch sinners from a burning hell, only that I have not at all times acted wisely; that I have not had more zeal and more love. When I take a view of my past life I see that in the best and most devoted part of it I have been an unprofitable servant; and that there has not been a day in which I might not have done something more, something



BROMLEY DAVENPORT ARMS (DONNITHORNE ARMS) ELLASTONE, SHOWING THE CLUB-ROOM OVER THE STABLES.

"The Domithorne Arms stood at the entrance of the village, and a small farmyard and stockyard which flanked it . . gave the traveller a promise of good feed for himself and his horse. Adam Bede, Chap. ii.

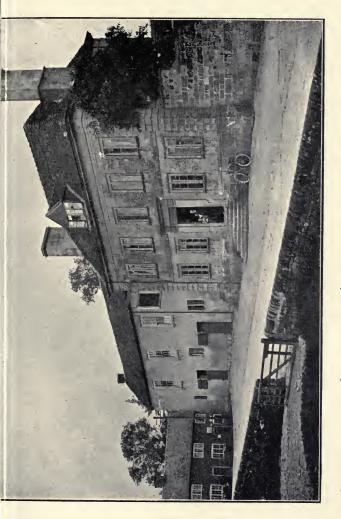
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better for God. I have ever needed, I need now more than ever, and for ever, the atoning blood. Christ is all in all to me; and His favour, His approbation and smile, the aim, the end, the blessedness of my life."

In this confession we have the very essence of the experience of Dinah Morris, as she was in real life. A lowly dependence on Christ and burning zeal for His glory were the moving forces in her character, and service for others only ceased with life itself. After Dinah's death Mr. Chadwick broke into verse, and his glowing picture of this saintly woman sprang, I know, from his heart. Here is an extract from the poem referring to Dinah Morris:

"There needs no marble to record her name, Engraved on human hearts, her deathless fame; Though deep among our hills her ashes lie, The memory of her labours cannot die; Voiced down to ages will her history be, A record of good works with sanctity.

All knew her labours here for many years, Her prayers, her sacrifice, her pleading tears; With spirit fired from God's great altar high, For God to live, for human souls to die.

The words of Dinah, in our market-place, Are told to millions of the human race, And millions yet unborn will tell the tale Of Dinah's labours in the Wirksworth Vale."

These lines record the impression produced on the mind of a man of business who knew Dinah well and survived her many years, whose mother was a devoted member of one of her classes, and who grew up to manhood himself under the shadow of her influence. While these articles have been passing through the

show that she was quite as popular and as much beloved as her husband, and there was a considerable uneasiness in the minds of Mr. Taft's contemporaries in the ministry, including some of the leading ministers of the Methodist Conference, in regard to the toleration allowed her in her public ministry among



REV. ZECHARIAH TAFT, AUTHOR OF "LIVES OF HOLY WOMEN," AND MRS. TAFT, A FAMOUS LADY PREACHER.

the Methodist people. It was well known that the Rev. J. Wesley had authorised, under what he designated an extraordinary call, the public ministration of several godly women known to him, who had shown exceptional ability and devotion in the blessed work of winning souls. At first he would seem to have been doubtful, but experience led him to the commonsense conclusion : "God owns women in the con-

CHAPTER IX

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DINAH MORRIS

"He the simplest thoughts instils, He the mildest rules imparts, Arms with power the weakest wills, Fills with joy the saddest hearts."

FOR a fund of interesting and authentic information on the life and experiences of Dinah Morris we must needs turn to a somewhat rare book, first published in 1825, republished later, but long since out of print. It bears a ponderous title : "Biographical Sketches of the lives and Public Ministry of various Holy Women, whose Eminent Usefulness and Successful Labours in the Church of Christ have entitled them to be enrolled among the great Benefactors of Mankind : in which are included several Letters from the Rev. J. Wesley, never before published. By Z. Taft. (The profits will be devoted to charitable purposes.)"

The volume thus quaintly introduced contains 323 pages, and gives particulars of the lives and ministry of forty-five preachers who were women. The history of the origin of the book is somewhat peculiar. The author, a godly Wesleyan minister, had for his wife a lady of considerable fame in her day, who was not only a devout and exemplary Christian, but an attractive and powerful preacher. The accounts we have of her

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the pulpit in any circumstances. The great man also insinuated that Mr. Taft's employment of his wife as a preacher was a tacit confession of his consciousness of his own insufficiency for the ministry. In spite of all this, however, the preaching still went on. Among Mrs. Taft's converts were some who became leading lights in the Methodist firmament.

Of all the pulpit and platform orators of his day, none were more powerful or famous than the Rev. Robert Newton, D.D. Of the local preachers of Methodism, no one was ever more gifted than the Yorkshire farmer, Mr. William Dawson, who really became a consummate orator, attracting crowds everywhere. The Rev. Thomas Jackson was the recognised head of a clan of Methodist preachers of that name, he was also a voluminous author and a venerated President of the Conference. All these were the spiritual fruits of the public ministry of Mrs. Taft, together with another of the presidents, and large numbers of equally godly persons who did not attain to such lofty eminence. This fruitful ministry, as modest as it was effective, could not be suppressed. But, in the Conference of 1833, complaint was made of it, and there was a good deal of scolding. Dr. Bunting alluded with some scorn to the asterisks on certain preachers' plans, which represented not only the appointments of Mrs. Taft, but these of Dinah Morris as well.

In the controversy that was waged over the preaching of Mrs. Taft, one holy and venerated man— President of the Conference two years after Mr. Wesley's death—the Rev. John Pawson—boldly stood up in defence of her preaching, and recommended her employment for special services. Still, prejudice ran



MRS. SUSANNAH WESLEY. Wife of the Vicar of Epworth, the first of the Methodist Lady Preachers. From a painting by J. W. L. Forster.

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high, many official Methodists were opposed, and so Mr. Taft published his book, as he tells his readers, "to offer a little encouragement to female preachers in general"; and, as anyone can see, to put the case of these preachers in as favourable a light as possible,



THE ROUND HOUSE AT WORTHINGTON, LEICESTERSHIRE.

both on Scriptural grounds, and also on the plea of manifest success in the conversion of souls. He cites with pride the manifold examples of the showing forth through the instrumentality of consecrated women of that abiding miracle of Christianity—the changed hearts and lives of sinful men and women. The answer of the blind man, whom our Lord healed in Jerusalem, naturally comes to mind : "Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes." So Mr. Taft appears to say : Here are hundreds of converts won to the Church by the preaching of women, and yet you in your rigid zeal would forbid them. The argument from Scripture is not all on one side. You have misunderstood Paul, and by your narrow interpretations of the Word, would limit the workings of the Holy Spirit and fight against God. This, in a few words, is the point of view of the introduction to Mr. Taft's book, and this is the argument running through all his sketches.

The first deals with that wonderful woman, Mrs. The second relates to another Susannah Weslev. truly great woman, the saintly wife of the Rev. John Fletcher, vicar of Madeley. The public ministry of both these wives of beneficed clergymen was undoubtedly irregular, but, as is shown in Mr. Taft's memoirs, it was a ministry of great spiritual power and blessed fruitfulness to many people. In the selection of his examples of female usefulness in preaching Mr. Taft was eminently catholic. They were not all Methodists by any means. Some were taken from the Society of Friends, some from the Congregationalists, and one was a titled Russian lady, the Baroness de Krudener. Of this devoted woman we are told that in her self-denying zeal she prosecuted evangelistic labours in her own country, in France and in Switzerland, that she was most beneficient in the employment of her large fortune, but that, like the women preachers in England, she was everywhere opposed by officials in the churches, who thought that such exercises were an infraction of ecclesiastical order and a breach of apostolic discipline. The sketch of the

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Baroness is the sixteenth in Mr. Taft's collection, and that of Dinah Morris is the seventeenth. The whole volume glows with the fires of intense zeal and fervent piety. The style is often rugged and homely, but no one can read the book without feeling the sublime reality of the lives it presents to us, and without



CHURCH AT WORTHINGTON, Where Elizabeth Tomlinson (Dinah Morris) was christened.

gaining new impressions of the immense possibilities to be realised by giving unfettered freedom to the work of the God-inspired female evangelist.

In the account of Dinah Morris, the subject is allowed to tell her own story, which she does in thirteen closely-printed pages. She had been long known to the compiler. Indeed, in that very incident in the aunt's life which became, according to George

Eliot, the germ of Adam Bede, Mr. Taft was, as we shall see, brought into very close relation with Dinah Morris. For several years he was her minister in Nottingham. More than twenty years after this, his book was published, and he winds up his sketch of her after this fashion : "I might have detained the reader, and that very profitably, with a larger portion of the labours and experience of this pious and useful woman, and I might have stated from my own personal knowledge, and from other sources, which her modesty and humility would not allow her to record, many interesting facts showing that she has been and now is a person whom the Lord delights to honour."

I think I know what Mr. Taft meant by his interesting and striking facts. Throughout the life of Dinah Morris there runs a vein of the miraculous. Indeed, more or less, this element manifests itself in well-nigh all the sketches contained in his book.

One might well inquire whether George Eliot knew this quaint old volume. I cannot speak with assurance on this point, but I am certain that it was well known in the Evans family : it was immensely prized by my grandmother and my mother, who handed it to me, and, judging from probabilities, I have no doubt George Eliot knew it well, and that it has coloured her portrait of Dinah Morris. I feel certain that one of the early copies would find its way to Griff House while George Eliot was yet an inquiring and wondering At all events, the book is positive proof that child. the aunt, on whom George Eliot has conferred a beneficent immortality, was famous in the eyes of many thousands of Methodist people long before Adam Bede had taken shape in her mind.

Our recital concerning the book will serve to show

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how the sketch supplied by Mr. Taft will assist us in pursuing the life-story of the real Dinah Morris. We have solid ground to go upon, and our narrative will be found to be full of interest.

In Dinah Morris's autobiographical statement the first note struck is one of blended duty and humility :

"For a long time I have felt it more or less my duty to write a short account of my unprofitable life, but it is with great difficulty I make a beginning. However, in the fear of the Lord, and, I trust, with a single eye to His glory I at last submit to take up my pen. I was born at Newbold, in Leicestershire, in the year of our Lord 1776."

The place here named is a township of the parish of Worthington, four and a half miles north of Ashby de la Zouch. It is a quiet rural spot in the midst of an undulating pastoral country, where, until recent years, agriculture was almost the only employment. Now there are large brickyards in the parish. and coal mines in the neighbourhood. The church of St. Matthew is a plain old-fashioned structure, formerly a chapel-ofease to the parish of Bredon-on-the-Hill. At Worthington there is an interesting relic of former days in the shape of a round-house or lock-up. Formerly no considerable parish was thought to be complete without its round-house, its stocks, and its whipping-post. Sometimes the lock-up was styled the blind-house, because it was built without windows. Such is the one at Worthington. It is a quaint structure, appearing, at a distance, like a low, tapering pedestal, and has very narrow accommodations. It was a place for the temporary detention of prisoners, but, like all other such places, has long been disused. Very few of them have been allowed to remain. Modern improvements have dealt rudely with old in-

stitutions. In times which I can well remember many small boroughs had their jail and treadmill, and one can scarcely wish them back again. We can hardly congratulate ourselves on our freedom from crime, as a whole, but if, in addition to educating our young



WESLEYAN CHAPEL, GRIFFY DAM.

people, the manifest determination to lessen the temptations to indulgence in strong drink should take effect, as appearances seem to promise, we may confidently anticipate a marked diminution of crime in the near future.

At the distance of a short walk from Worthington and Newbold, across a pleasant vale and water-brook, there is situated the hamlet of Griffy Dam, or as it undoubtedly was named, originally, Griffith's Dam. In this hamlet there is a good-sized, old-fashioned

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Wesleyan chapel, with a considerable graveyard attached to it, in which Dinah Morris's father was interred in virtue of his own request. In this very chapel she heard sermons when only seven or eight years old which she never forgot, and in her autobiography mentioned the texts on which they were founded. In after life she always declared that even at that early period God was speaking to her young heart. Her father, she tells us, was a sincere churchman, who was extremely moral and upright, who loathed every kind of untruthfulness and dishonesty, and strove to train his children according to the light that was in him, but fell short, as she thought, of a personal religious experience. In later years paralysis overtook him, when he received visits from the friends at the chapel, and even had prayer meetings in his own house. It was in consequence of this that he desired interment in the chapel burial-ground. His daughter cherished every hope in the father's spiritual condition in his later years, as she had every reason to do. The mother was one of those awakened souls who walked truly according to the things she knew, longed earnestly for a light she had not found, and yearned in spirit for an assurance which only came to her almost with her dying breath. Both father and mother were worthy people, children of toil, simple, godly. Christian village residents, peaceful and orderly in all their ways. The father's name was Thomas Tomlinson-the mother was suddenly snatched away while her baby was still in its first year. In his reminiscences of Dinah Morris, gathered mostly from her own lips, Mr. Chadwick tells us that the mother, conscious of approaching death, committed her darling babe to her God, and solemnly devoted her to His

service. The recital of the events of the mother's death deeply influenced her whole life. From tender years she was told that she was God's child, and belonged to Him by the holy consecration of a dying mother's prayers.

A singular occurrence is mentioned in her account of the mother's death, related with much brevity and modesty, as became Dinah Morris. I have, however, heard some amplifications of that account from family sources which enable me to fill up the outlines of the narrative. We are, then, to suppose the dying woman rapidly approaching her end, with a deep yearning in her soul for spiritual manifestations she had not received. There was no one about her who could impart the instruction for which she was longing. She seems to have been more or less shut out from contact with outward things by approaching dissolution when an unexpected visitor arrived. Thomas Tomlinson had a cousin living at a distance of some miles, who was a devoted Methodist. On the day of Mrs. Tomlinson's decease this cousin had an irresistible impression that he must go and visit his friends at Newbold, although he knew of no reason why he should do so, as he had received no tidings of the illness of his relative. He obeyed this unaccountable impression, and found her in extremis. Nevertheless, he tenderly addressed her in the blessed language of the old, old story, and she revived on hearing it, received it with glad thanksgiving, saying : "The Lord Jesus Christ has sent you here to show me the way of salvation." It was then she was able to devote her child to the service of Heaven, and shortly afterwards died in peace. The story of the mother's death was often related by Dinah Morris to her chosen friends, among

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others to my mother. She believed that the impression so mysteriously fixed in the mind of the cousin to visit the home at Newbold was a divine intimation, as surely as was the vision which prepared the Apostle



GENERAL VIEW OF GRIFFY DAM, WORTHINGTON.

Peter to carry the blessed evangel to Cornelius and his household at Cæsarea.

She also believed in miraculous impressions in general, including dreams and visions, which had come to her, to be her guide and comfort in various exigencies of her life and ministrations. Many narratives of such things were suppressed by her on the ground that they would be misunderstood, and therefore would not tend to edification. To herself they were all intensely real, hence the supernatural manifestation, as she believed it, in the case of her mother, was but the

first of a chain of Providences which extended through the whole of her life. All through this set of memoirs by Mr. Taft, there runs this consciousness of direct personal touch with things unseen. Clairvovance, Telepathy, and Psychic research have made it less possible in these modern days to be altogether unbelieving as to the existence of supernatural phenomena. the spiritual side we appear to be surrounded by a world of mystery, miracle and wonder. Surely there is a rebound from the hard materialism of a generation ago. The early Methodists had no hesitation in accepting manifestations of the marvellous. Their great leader, one of the mightiest of men, firmly believed that the life we live in the flesh is encompassed about by spiritual existences, whose presence is not ordinarily recognised by our bodily senses. How well I remember his "Signs from the Invisible World," which I read when I was a boy. The weird stories fastened on my imagination, and haunted me for many a year, until every hedge-row and hill-side was peopled by apparitions. That feeling has long since been shaken off, but in these later days of life one has come to be more and more conscious of the near touch of unseen powers.

Concerning unaccountable impressions of the mind which have had an important bearing on after events there have been many authenticated examples. One of the most striking out of many I have met with is related of a gentleman who was a member of the Society of Friends. The story is given on the authority of a former Prebendary of Hereford. It tells how that one Thomas Waring, of Leominster, had an impression that he must set off immediately to the town of Ross, which was thirty miles away. He tried to get

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rid of the impression without effect, and having ordered the saddling of his horse, started out on his long journey at four o'clock of the afternoon. It was late when he reached Ross, but seeing a light in an upper room of a house he felt constrained to knock at the door, and waited long for admittance. At last a young woman appeared and asked what he pleased to want. He told her he did not know, but if she would listen to what he had to say perhaps she might explain it. She invited him in; he told his story to her, concluding with the words : " And having told thee this. I can only repeat that I do not know for what I am come." The young woman burst into tears, and then said : "Sir, I can tell you for what you are come, for I was gone into that upper room with the intention of putting an end to my life, which has become very miserable. Nothing would have prevented me from committing suicide had you not come. God has sent you. I now see that I am not altogether forsaken or abandoned by Him."

The account of the impression on this good old Quaker's mind closely resembles that which led Dinah Morris's relative to visit her dying mother. Well might the father's story influence the child's wondering thoughts.

None could know what should be the future of that frail, motherless child. But at least we may conclude that the loving-kindness of the Heavenly Shepherd revived the spirit of the departing mother, as we know it shed through life a radiant light on the offspring she loved so well. Truly the mother's dying prayer to God was answered, and her babe was in reality given to be His child for ever.

CHAPTER X

DINAH MORRIS, FROM BABYHOOD TO WOMANHOOD

"The baby has no skies But mother's eyes, Nor any God above But mother's love. His angel sees the Father's face, But he the mother's, full of grace; And yet the heavenly kingdom is Of such as this."—JOHN B. TABB.

THE infant, Elizabeth Tomlinson-the future Dinah Morris—was only given to dwell one short year in the restful heaven of a mother's love. The loss of the mother coloured all her memories of childhood: "What I have suffered through the loss of my dear mother can only be explained in eternity, but the Lord's ways are in the whirlwind, and what we know not now we shall know hereafter." Much is veiled under that pious sentiment. She is reticent and does not care to say more, still there is no difficulty in understanding what was in her mind. Her father married a second time, and the stress and strain of life in those hard times and in that village home were heavy enough to bear. As to the outward circumstances of the child we find scarcely a mention, but her inner life stands fully revealed to us. Putting together the reminiscences gathered by Mr. A. Chadwick and the words of the autobiography, we may conclude that the father took his little girl with him to the parish church betimes, and set before

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her a good example. His Methodist cousin also cared for the spiritual training of the child, and it was the seed sown at the services in the Griffy Dam Wesleyan Chapel which took root in the young heart. Her recollections were very clear



ONE OF THE LAST WORN OF ELIZABETH EVANS' (DINAH MORRIS') BONNETS.

as to the impressions wrought on her mind, even as early as her seventh year and onward. In her autobiography she actually recalls sermons she heard at that period, and states the topics on which the discourses were founded. It is not difficult to imagine the innocent maiden of seven, with eyes intent and a look of sublime wonder on her face, as the preacher

expounded from the thrilling parable of the rich man and Lazarus the terrors of an eternity without love and the dread future for every soul who has lived in this world for nothing beyond the sensual gratification of carnal appetites. The sermon, though not intended by the preacher for this captivated little one, has found lodgement in her soul for ever. It was well for the young child that another side of the future life was proclaimed in her hearing. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. xiii. 14), formed the theme of another discourse she remembered quite well, more pleasing, one would think, if not more fascinating, than the other. O, preachers of the eighteenth century, in that Methodist chapel in the hamlet of Griffy Dam, you toiled wearily enough in your work in that country congregation. You sighed with intensity of desire for the people's welfare and went away with agonised disappointment sometimes, because so little had been accomplished. At the listlessness of many of your hearers you were pained, but you never noticed the fixed gaze of the little maiden who was all intent in wondering at your words, nor did you realise that you had sown deep down in the fruitful soil of her spiritual nature potent seeds which were one day to bear fruit in a beautiful life and help to fertilise a barren world. Even of preaching it may often be said :

> "Oh, many a shaft at random sent Finds mark the archer little meant."

Notwithstanding her tender age the child has her speculations concerning preaching. Telling us of what she felt to be the work of the Divine Spirit in her heart, she says :

BABYHOOD TO WOMANHOOD

"He blessed me with clear light concerning the nature of preaching. I saw that reading was not preaching. I thought I could read a sermon and yet I could not preach, and that it was not the way that God intended that men should preach the Gospel. I was powerfully impressed with a sense of the shortness of time and the awful consequences of dying in sin."



ELIZABETH EVANS (DINAH MORRIS) AUNT OF GEORGE ELIOT.

We find that, though so young in years, these serious convictions never wore away till the great crisis in her spiritual life had come. I have noticed that in the

lives of good men and holy women, spiritual exercises are not at all unusual in tender years. It is a touching picture Dinah Morris draws for us, and one that suggests the reflection that teachers and preachers can hardly be too much concerned for the patient instruction of the little ones. There are yearnings in their young hearts of which we are but faintly conscious. We do not, any of us, fully realise the possibilities of child-life, and hence we too frequently fail to renderthat real help our youthful charge requires at our hands.

"The Lord continued to strive with me and to keep me from falling into many grievous sins which were both evil and bitter. I used to say my prayers and strictly examine myself by the law of Moses every night. I always felt myself condemned from these words: 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' I saw that he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all. These words were most powerfully impressed on my mind: 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them,' and what to do I knew not. I wept and prayed and tried to find the living way, though I was lost and confused. dark and blind. Oh, how I longed for instruction, but had no one to take me by the hand, or, I believe, at that time, I should have been brought to the knowledge of the truth. Oh, how I prayed the publican's prayer: 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' I had some faint views of Christ coming into the world to save sinners, but how I was to be saved by Him I could not tell. I wandered in the dark, sinning and repenting for a long time."

The dawning of spiritual truth on the young mind is a deep psychological mystery. Here we have a little girl growing up amidst the blooming of flowers and the singing of birds in the country. She is without any special instruction suited to the mind of a child. At this very time Robert Raikes is but just commencing

we thall be ready and willing to other the sall mot have all there good things here which we enjoy and which I am very thankfun in as well for my Family as myself as I Law her Bajer in this would more then I ever expected to be - Mary Anne is ory well and Lends her love to you and is very glad that in a way to be comfortable again, Millon. traghten, On the med Clarke, J. A. Evans & wife are with well is are har got a fire Boy about 15 months nothin near at havid I am glad Thear that your wife holds puty well give my sur respects and love to her + creept the same forme vill for your coving Besten Ast. Server i koworth

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER FROM ROBERT EVANS (ADAM BEDE) TO SAMUEL EVANS (SETH BEDE.)



his experiment of teaching the idle youth of the city of Gloucester in a Sunday School, and it was long, long years before such institutions had found their way into the country districts of Leicestershire, and yet the infant mind of this rural cottager is revolving high truths of revelation, drinking in spiritual instruction from the pulpit, examining and condemning herself by the word of God, and only falls short of personal application of the pardoning grace of the Saviour because, as she declared years afterwards, there was no one to teach her how to make that application in her own case.

These early experiences of Dinah Morris, as recorded by Mr. Taft, do not stand alone in the sketches he has drawn for us. He lets us see how Mrs. Susannah Wesley and Mrs. Fletcher of Madeley had similar mental exercises in childhood. His sketches are necessarily fragmentary-in some cases especially so-but where particulars are given we find often recurring testimony of as clear and vivid religious impression imparted in childhood as could ever be received at any subsequent period of life. In some cases Mr. Taft selects his examples from amongst the members of the Society of Friends, and finds this feature strongly marked in them, but in others, with very imperfect instruction, it is precisely the same. Two instances are given wherein spiritual yearnings were felt and deep impressions made on the heart at as early an age as four years, and never afterwards effaced as long as life endured. Many of these holy women, I am sure, could have exclaimed with the still remembered authoress, Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe : " My infant hands were early lifted up to Thee, and I soon learned to acknowledge the God of my fathers." Christian biography teems

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with examples of a clear divine call, while as yet the heart was tender. Records of the lives of the saints of the old time furnish many instructive examples. Legends of patristic literature are crowded with them. behind which there must be much that is real. Let me give a collection of the names of men, taken almost at random, who have attained to distinction, whose religious experience dates back to the days of early childhood. Among them are Dr. Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, Count Zinzendorf, George Whitfield, Dr. Isaac Watts, Dr. Philip Doddridge, John Foster, Albert Bengel, etc. From what has been witnessed of children in every Christian country one can see that a powerful book might be written revealing the vast possibilities and the beautiful reality of Christian childhood. From such a volume those who have to deal with children might learn much hopefulness in their task.

In Mr. Taft's sketch of Dinah Morris there are no other details of her childhood than those here given. As to education there were only the scant elements and these imperfectly taught. Newbold has now its fairly equipped schools, maintained for the most part at the charges of the State. It has its trained instructors also. Books were scant then, school attendance fitful; Elizabeth was the eldest child, the pressure on the home was severe, and at fourteen years of age she had to take her place among the ranks of the workers, that she might earn her own livelihood by becoming a domestic servant. In this she recognised a gracious Providence.

"I believe the hand of God has been upon me all the days of my life. I believe the Lord directed me to leave my father's house when I was little more than fourteen years old. I lived at Derby about seven years with a family that knew very little more about religion than myself. We had plenty of prayer-books and saying of prayers, but very little heart-felt religion."

To her apprehension vital godliness began with a definite personal experience, including confession of sin in the presence of the Lord, faith in the atoning mercy of the Redeemer, regeneration by a mysterious divine energy, and a definite consecration of body, soul and spirit to the living God. This it was that she secretly longed for, but knew not how to find, in spite of the powerful strivings in childhood. She intimates that her privileges in Derby were not such as to lead her into the experiences she coveted, but there came a change when she was nearing her twenty-first year. She bade farewell to domestic service and became a lace-mender in the town of Nottingham. Probably this trade definition will convey no definite idea to the reader's mind. Lace-mending is an important process in lace manufacture. The fragile threads from which woven frequently give way the material is while a piece is passing through the looms, or in the process of dressing, therefore each piece of lace must needs go from the machine to the lace-mender to have the pattern restored where it is broken and the piece made perfect. The women employed in this skilled industry are as smart and clever a set of female artisans as are anywhere to be found. Here Dinah Morris graduated in the industry, but her mind was not at rest. Her privileges were enlarged, and her life more free, vet circumstances seemed to conspire to keep her back from the prize she coveted above all others

"I loved the Methodists, and always believed that if ever I was religious I should be one, but I had no acquaintance with any of them. The tears I have shed on this account are known only to the Lord. I had now left service, and was at liberty to serve God, but I had reasoned for a few weeks with the enemy of my soul. I thought I never was happy, but I would be if possible. I sometimes went to the giddy dance, sometimes to card-playing, shameful to tell after such repeated convictions for sin, but I could not find what I sought for—happiness. I only grew more and more miserable."

"There is in man," says George Eliot, "a higher aim than love of happiness : he can do without happiness, and instead thereof find blessedness." It is a strange paradox, and yet true, when we say that they who chase after happiness never find it, but to them who take their cross and pursue the paths of duty and service happiness comes without the seeking. Dinah Morris's search for happiness in the diversions of the giddy dance and the fascinating card-table did not last long. The thirst of her soul could not be slaked in any such pursuits, but she was soon to find true blessedness. On the Easter Tuesday in 1797 she went to a place called Beck Barn to hear preaching by a Wesleyan minister who had recently returned from Newfoundland-the Rev. George Smith. The mention of this preaching place in Nottingham calls to mind the first great Methodist secession. "Our people were turned out of their chapel through Kilham's division." wrote Dinah Morris. The fact was that the secession occurred through the rejection by the Conference of a petition to allow the Methodist people to have the sacraments administered in all their places of worship by their own ministers instead of, as in Wesley's days, going for them to the ministry of the established church, and through the expulsion of the chief mover-the Rev.

Albonises fer 31 10 41 My for that Sain by hayong to heaver you ting A Comportable but more Expected that you I dre the Relignes percectings you speak of and theye you will Tupper by them but you must and your whole Heart To gos Low deck all your Happeneips in him En regard every thing eld as only Submicent bie pins. Befog Browner Jarfroms one that you have Withere for him to come to have at affin struto & heltine of Tang ar it want be to tacking had for your por Bratter and distre besnise of the chop and it while make you and there anonifertable for Dife asit is not sight to where a servent away from every Whene last Especiely prover your Brithing wiren doch Summationes Mer Mout con get about main but gour l'arther canto not get a main for the Mar That which be juspossible the dide you will be better depperation and I happe you a wat white to gaine custon same and befor Mather & know the will take it have that you have a fifter to Topic Buston and not to there amy such some Whit isting Mainhay been near hereite

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER FROM ELIZABETH EVANS (DINAH MORRIS) TO ONE OF HER DAUGHTERS AWAY FROM HOME.

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BABYHOOD TO WOMANHOOD

Alexander Kilham. Wesley's idea of his Denomination was that of a Society within the established church. Kilham desired to precipitate the inevitable movement which was to separate the one from the other and to constitute the great Methodist body as a distinctive, self-contained Christian community. Probably his methods were not altogether gracious and gentle, he went ahead of his contemporaries, desiring to make a pace which the Conference leaders deprecated : he committed himself to a course which seemed an infraction of the laws of the Conference brotherhood, and was therefore expelled. Thus arose the Methodist New Connexion. In those days the Hockley Chapel was the only one possessed by the Wesleyans in the town of Nottingham. It was legally vested in a body of trustees, the major portion of whom sympathised with the seceders, and therefore took over the chapel with them. The secession not only deprived the Wesleyan body of its sanctuary, but carried away more than three hundred of its members. In reality the Society was rent in twain.

Since 1797 several other divisions have occurred in the Methodist body, but if one may judge by recent events, the wave of secession has now expended its force, and the spirit of reunion has begun to assert itself. This is witnessed by the amalgamation of the separated branches into one great Methodist Church in British America and Australasia, and by efforts in the same direction at home. The same wholesome tendency is witnessed among the greater denominations of Presbyterians in Scotland. In that quarter secession has formerly been rife enough. I have read of a Scotch nobleman whose butler was a Presbyterian elder. One day he said to the butler, "I say, Sandy, you belong to the split, don't you?" "No, my lord. I belong to the split of the splitted split," was the immediate answer. In a case like this secession has travelled far, but we have fallen on happier times. Perchance the lesson has been learned that it is the devil who most profits by the quarrels of the saints.

The room called Beck Barn was but a temporary meeting-place waiting the erection of a permanent structure, an event which really happened in the following year, and on the same site there stands to-day a fine old Methodist sanctuary, loved by several generations of Nottingham Weslevans-the Halifax Place chapel. To Beck Barn then Dinah Morris went, on Easter Tuesday, 1797, and from what she tells us of the service we may gather that it was one of revivalistic fervour and long continuance. The Rev. George Smith was the preacher. She says that there was a great work among the people, many cried out for mercy, while the workers were fully employed in pleading with the penitents and praying on their behalf. Often they broke into song as one and another declared their trust in pardoning grace, expressing their glad emotions on this account in the majestic strains of Bishop Ken's doxology. Dinah Morris seems to have thought that a lively scene like this required some explanation, hence she savs-

"I saw no confusion in the matter. I concluded that sinners were repenting of their sins, as I ought to do, and the people of God were so anxious for them to be saved, and these things caused them to rejoice. I longed for repentance more than ever I did for anything in my life, but I felt great hardness of heart. While I was looking to Christ the mighty power of God fell upon me in an instant. I fell to the ground like one dead. I believe I lost my senses for a season, but when I recovered I was trembling and weeping most bitterly. It pleased the Lord in about two hours to speak peace to my soul. I arose from my knees and praised God for that opportunity."

In this account we have portrayed not only a case of mental and spiritual crisis, but of physical phenomena as well. Such phenomena frequently occur in the history of religious awakenings. Under the preaching alike of the fervid Whitfield or the logical Wesley, the strongest men were seen to fall stricken to the ground one after another. At first there was perplexity and debate as to whence these phenomena came, but after due inquiry with the commonsense and willingness to learn which usually distinguished him, John Wesley wrote : " From this time I hope we shall allow God to carry on His own work in His own way." Doubtless there is some danger in these abnormal manifestations. Hysteria and catalepsy have been said to account for them, but only very partially, there is an element of mystery left which we are not able to explain. Anyhow, they are but physical and accidental, and experience has shown that, while the physical phenomena pass away without any ill effects, the spiritual blessing remains. So with Dinah Morris. That blessed Easter Tuesday witnessed the beginning of a new experience, the entrance of a new life. The dying mother's prayer for her feeble infant child was now to have its gracious answer.

How helpless is the little babe so early deprived of its mother, as Dinah Morris was, but now the child has grown to maturity, and, in her consecrated womanhood, the fond petition of the mother is to meet its complete and eternal fulfilment. In that makeshift sanctuary—Beck Barn—the book called Adam Bede was really born, for assuredly Dinah Morris gave to her niece, George Eliot, the living germ from which 13

it sprang, and the real Dinah Morris, the woman of unconquerable sympathy, unbounded hope and unfailing love, received her true spiritual birth in that unconsecrated structure-Beck Barn. In that simple building a saint life was born, as pure, as sweet, and as true as ever adorned the soul of a human being. One cannot read such a book as Mr. Taft's nor can we open our eyes to what is taking place in our own times, without feeling that the age of saints has not yet passed away, while among the truest and the best of saints there have ever been a number of consecrated women. The women of the Reformation were quite as noble and heroic as the men. The Puritan women shed a lustre The Methodist revival abounded in on their age. consecrated womanhood. Our own age has been blessed with fine examples too, in whose fragrant worth there has been no monopoly by any denomination of Christians. Dinah Morris, in her day, combined in her own person and character many of the graces attributed to these godly women, and in real life truly won for herself the queenly place her niece has accorded to her in fiction. The gravestone of Helen Walker in Scotland bears an inscription dictated by Sir Walter Scott. Those readers of Scott who remember the immortal Jeanie Deans will understand its force. It says: "This humble individual practised in real life the virtues with which fiction has invested the imaginary character of Jeanie Deans." It will be our privilege henceforth to show that Elizabeth Tomlinson, known now as Dinah Morris, practised in daily life all the womanly and Christly virtues with which fiction in its turn has invested her, and, indeed, many more which are not recorded in fiction, but are nevertheless written in memorials that cannot die.

CHAPTER XI

DINAH MORRIS-LIFE AND WORK IN NOTTINGHAM

"Saints lived not in the past alone. But thread to-day the unheeding street; And stairs, to sin and famine known Sing with the welcome of their feet; The den they enter grows a shrine, The grimy sash an oriel burns, Their cup of water warms like wine, Their speech is filled from heavenly urns." Adapted from LowelL.

CAN there be a more interesting study than the development of a young Christian soul under the highest and holiest influences? In tracing the real story of Dinah Morris, this is the theme which invites contemplation, and it runs along lines of close association with the ministry and worship of Halifax Place Chapel, Nottingham.

In 1797 the Wesleyans in that town were limited to the poor accommodation of Beck Barn. A site for a new sanctuary was procured in 1798, and Halifax Place Chapel was forthwith erected. At this juncture a truly great minister came upon the scene, one of the faithful and mighty itinerants whom Wesley sent into the ministry. These were men of great spiritual power, dauntless courage, stern self-denial and consecrated de-

votion. Their faith and zeal were unbounded and their labours strenuous and untiring. They suffered severe hardships and endured revolting cruelties, but, in spite of all these things, they went from conquering to conquer. One of the mightiest of them all was William Bramwell, the superintendent minister in



THE REV. WILLIAM BRAMWELL.

Nottingham from 1798 to 1801. His course there was one continuous triumph. He found distraction and controversy, with which he resolved not to meddle. His mission was to preach spiritual truths, win souls, train godly workers, and lead the Christian flock into the sure attainment of holy character. So well did he

succeed, that after a period of sore spiritual anguish and eager wrestlings, all things were changed. His helpers were loyal fellow-workers and his triumph was complete. It was said of him, "There was no pause in his labours. Early and late he was at work; almost every moment he was found practising some part of his duties, whether obligatory or self-imposed : now fasting, watching, meditating, praying in private; then visiting, exhorting, comforting in families; and again pleading or preaching in public." During his last year in Nottingham there was terrible social disorder and abounding public distress. That he might give the more help to the starving people he rigorously reduced the supplies of himself and his household to the lowest possible limit, even to a degree which involved some danger to health, but philanthropy was his master passion. Happily, we of this generation can scarcely realise the hard necessities of those distressful times. Good, sound wheat can now be purchased at thirty shillings per quarter-in those days it was rarely less than four pounds per quarter, and occasionally reached the famine price of seven or eight pounds. Wages at best were low and semi-starvation prevailed. In spite of all obstacles, the loss of three hundred members by the prevailing secession had been balanced by new gains in the first year of Mr. Bramwell's pastorate; in the second the new accessions were still more numerous, and at the end of his term there was a reinforcement of over one thousand souls. The ministry of this devoted man had great charm for Dinah Morris, and helped to form the character she afterwards bore. She repeatedly mentions him in her chapter of autobiography, and in her first reference styles him, "that man of God, Mr. Bramwell." His prayers, his preach-

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ing and his life were an abiding influence to the end of her days.

We must now turn to her memoirs to mark the several stages of her spiritual development, and a few brief extracts will show her decision of character, growth in experience, and her introduction to private Christian work and public ministry. The first of these relates to her union with the Methodist Church. Prior to the Easter Tuesday of 1797, we find her lamenting her lack of acquaintance with the Methodist people, but after her experiences of that night, she speedily remedied this inconvenience.

"Our dear friends omitted inviting me to a class, which might have proved hurtful if the Lord had not blessed me with courage, for I know not one Methodist in the town; but 1 asked a young woman if she knew where any Methodists lived; she said her father was one. I went and spoke to him concerning the society, he invited me to go with him to the class, I went without any hesitation, and felt it both my privilege and my duty."

Here we perceive marked decision of character in circumstances none too favourable. If lonesome young inquirers would overcome natural shyness as she did, it would facilitate their spiritual growth and usefulness, as it did hers. The position she now assumed was that of the unwavering disciple. Every forward step gives evidence of this fact. Her days of weeping for lack of opportunities were over, her days of consecration had come. She writes :

"I had entirely done with the pleasures of the world and with all my old companions. I saw it my duty to leave off all my superfluities in dress; hence, I pulled off all my bunches, cut off my curls, left off all my lace, and in this I found an unspeakable pleasure. I saw I could make a better use of my time and money than to follow the fashions of a vain world."



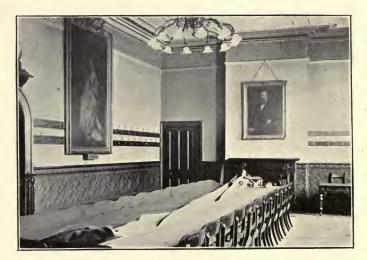
COUNTY HALL AND ASSIZE COURTS, NOTTINGHAM. Scene of the Trial of Mary Voce (Hetty Sorrel).

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The course she now followed with regard to her dress was one which, doubtless, for a young woman of twenty-one, would be considered extreme. The lacemenders of Nottingham are a smart well-dressed and respectable body of female artisans, and it was to this class she belonged. I am not sure that the temptations to display in the matter of dress were not more potent a hundred years ago than they are to-day. I have distinct recollection of ball and wedding dresses exhibited to my admiring eyes when I was very young. These pertained to the times of Dinah Morris, and were worn by women who were her relations and mine, but if such styles, colours and patterns were worn now, we should vote them loud and gaudy. It seems to me that there has been distinct improvement in styles, patterns, colours and fabrics, but Dinah Morris, after her decided manner, settled her fashions for herself, once for all. She adopted the Quakeress attire, which is by no means inartistic. Her public garb consisted of a black dress, a white shawl, a neat muslin cap, and a lofty coalscuttle bonnet. Her modes never changed, and some choice relics of her clothing are cherished by her descendants to this day. I well remember some other Methodist woman who wore the Quaker habit as a protest against the vanities of the time. Dinah Morris took this position as to dress to mark her surrender of that worldly living in which for awhile she had vainly striven to find happiness.

She now formed regular habits of piety. Seasons of secret prayer became a daily rapture. The Scriptures were her special delight. "Oh, the precious seasons I experienced in these exercises!" She finds it still inspiring, after many years, to dwell in thought

upon those early experiences. In this age of whirl and hurry there is special danger lest secret meditation and prayer should be crowded out of our lives, and devotional reading of the Scriptures be grievously neglected. After the arrival of Mr. Bramwell in Nottingham, her mind became exercised about other matters. One peculiarity of his teaching was, that in conse-



GRAND JURY ROOM, COUNTY HALL, NOTTINGHAM.

quence of its spiritual bond of union with the risen and glorified Redeemer, the believing soul may be so filled with the Holy Spirit as to be raised into moral purity, and may feel so sublimated in motive as to cherish no feeling in the heart contrary to the love of God. This attainment was set forth under the terms of sanctification and perfect love. Mr. Bramwell insisted that all Christians should press onward to attain this higher life. It appears that Dinah Morris had prolonged mental anguish concerning the attainment of holiness, and at last this conclusion is reached :

"After many struggles, thousands of tears and much prayer with fastings, I did enter into glorious liberty. I could truly say, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Oh, the blessed deadness to the world and everything in the world and the creature I cannot describe. I began to act a little in prayer-meetings, to visit the sick, and to do anything the Lord set me about."

The visitation of the sick in those days entailed serious risks in Nottingham, because, for lack of sanitation, fearful epidemics prevailed. The scourge of typhus fever, now almost unknown, was then a dreadful visitant. Dinah Morris caught the infection through ministering to a stricken family, and was very ill with the fever. In her ardour of spiritual enthusiasm she scorned to send for a doctor. "I thought when Christ was applied unto in the days of His flesh by any one, for anything, either for body or soul, He did for them whatever they had need of; and, while I was looking to Him and exercising my faith upon Him, I most powerfully felt these words applied to my mind : 'And He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.' I felt in the twinkling of an eye that the fever was gone, all my pain had ceased, and I was quite restored to health. Glory be to God." In a state of convalescence she at once made a journey to Derby, and there engaged in various exercises-such as delivering exhortations in prayer-meetings and leading society classes. Never did she doubt the unseen power of the invisible God had healed her of her fever, and the incident was one of the means which led her to engage

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in public exercises. Her reverend pastor, Mr. Bramwell, always encouraged female evangelism. On several occasions he invited women helpers to share with him the work of winning souls and promoting re-In this way he brought Miss Barrett, who vivals. afterwards became Mrs. Zechariah Taft, to assist him in Nottingham. One day when preaching in Halifax Place Chapel he said : "Why are there not more women preachers? Because they are not faithful to their call." Here was a new view of possible duty, which, in the case of Dinah Morris, led to the most intense exercises of mind. "The love of God was as a fire shut up in my bones, and the thoughts of the blessed work of bringing souls to Christ drank up my spirits, so that I knew not how to live !" The visit to Derby was an occasion of public exercises in prayer-meetings, but another startling event followed, which precipitated her further career in witnessing for Christ. At the Lent assizes in Nottingham in the year 1802, Sir Richard Graham condemned eleven persons to capital punishment. 'The law and its administration were then most, barbarous. These culprits were not all sentenced for murder, because crimes against property were then punishable by death. One poor boy, ten years old, not in Nottingham, however, stole a silk handkerchief valued at four shillings, and was hung for the offence. A man in London had been arrested by His Majesty's press-gang and carried off to the war, leaving his wife and three children uncared for, and in a state of starvation. Passing by a draper's shop in Ludgate Hill, the poor woman seized a roll of coarse calico-cloth valued at seven shillings and sixpence. She did not succeed in carrying it away from the premises, nevertheless she was promptly arrested, flung into prison, tried for her



CROWN COURT, COUNTY HALL, NOTTINGHAM.



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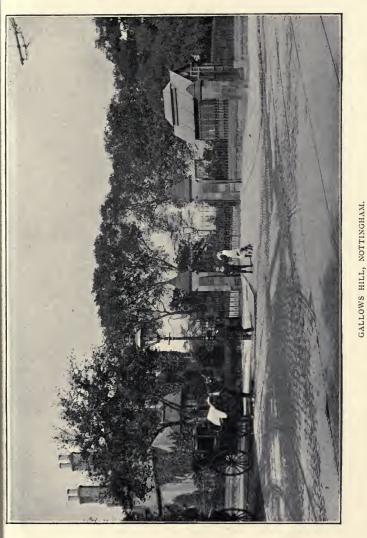
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life, condemned and hung! She was drawn in a cart to the place of execution with her baby at her breast. Originally the law enjoined the punishment of death for any theft of property of whatsoever value. In 1802 the stolen goods must be of the minimum value of halfa-crown. The Lord Stanhope of those days brought a Bill into the House of Lords proposing to raise the minimum to five shillings, but another peer, Lord Wynford, resisted it successfully as a revolutionary measure, declaring that if it should pass into law the people of England would no longer be able to sleep in their beds and nobody's property would be safe. Many years passed before these cruel laws were repealed.

There was, however, at this Nottingham assize, one case of child murder. The perpetrator was Mary Voce, a girl of only nineteen years, although married to a bricklaver and the mother of two children. In the Nottingham public journals of the day it was said that she was given to irregularities of life which led her husband to forsake her, and, being left with two young children, she administered poison to the younger of the two, was arraigned before judge and jury, and sentenced to be hung. Her case excited much compassion. She was impassive and obdurate at her trial, but she was so forsaken and helpless, that, in spite of her sin, her forlorn condition moved the hearts of the Methodist people of the Halifax Place Chapel, so they consulted with each other as to what could be done to save her It is at least a relief to know that in those resoul. lentless times, when the hangman was so busy, not only Methodist Christians, but others also, were accustomed to concern themselves deeply for the spiritual welfare of condemned persons prior to their execution. In this case, action had to be very alert, for Mary Voce

was convicted on a Friday evening and sentenced to be hung on the following Monday morning. In those days vengeance was not only stern, but swift also. By the detention of the judge in the town beyond the usual time, the convict obtained a respite of twenty-four hours' duration—a period most precious to her and momentous in the history of Dinah Morris. It would seem that on Saturday, the day after the sentence, the prison authorities were approached, and permission obtained for two women of the Methodist flock to have free access to Mary Voce, and to stay with her in the condemned cell day and night till the hour of her execution.

One of the two selected for this mission was Dinah Morris. She and her companion made the best possible use of the brief time which was available, and spent practically the whole of it with the young, wayward It would appear from a collation of two or three soul. independent narratives, that both Sunday and Monday nights and the day intervening were spent in the There was a period of deep mournfulness and prison. spiritual agony before light broke on the gloom. Dinah Morris, with her tender, sympathetic spirit, seems to have felt the most exquisite anguish during the first night. In spite of all that these gracious sisters of the lost soul could do, she seems to have remained callous for many hours. How they would exhort, and instruct, and sing and pray, we can readily imagine. It was not, however, till the beginning of the second night's watch that relenting came. Some of the Methodists outside the gaol felt as deeply for the spiritual welfare of Mary Voce as the two who were inside. One John Clark was so thoroughly agonised in spirit, that he vowed neither to eat food nor to sleep until he had ob-



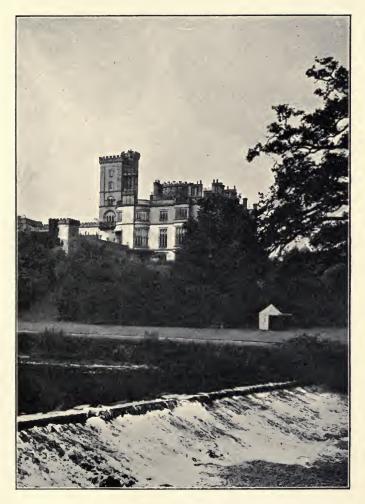
Site of the execution of Mary Voce (Hetty Sorrel.)



tained assurance in prayer that this poor woman would be saved. Such assurance was, as he believed, youchsafed to him about two o'clock of the Monday morning, and in the evening of the same day he made a visit to the prison to join in the exercises there. Mr. Taft also -I presume the Mr. Taft we have heard of beforecame on the like errand. There was hope now, for relenting had already begun, a full confession was made, one hour was spent in joint intercessions for mercy ; instructions, exhortations and encouragements were mingled with the petitions, and then "the Lord in mercy spoke peace to her soul. She cried out : ' Oh. how happy I am ! The Lord has pardoned all my sins and I shall go to heaven.' She never lost the evidence for one moment, but always rejoiced in the hope of glory."

The closing scene is easy to follow in Dinah Morris's narrative, and also from that which is still preserved as having been taken from the journals of the time. The hours went quickly on, relieved of their sombre dread by the inward change experienced by the repentant and rejoicing convict. Early in the morning there came to the condemned cell the Sheriff for Nottingham, accompanied by the Governor of the gaol attended by several warders, and followed by the executioner. Very quickly the sentence is read over in her hearing, and its justice confessed. The hangman ties a rope round her neck, which she assists him in adjusting. Then she is handcuffed and pinioned. A cart is waiting at the gaol door, into which she is quickly hoisted. A plank spans the vehicle, on which she is seated, with Dinah Morris on one side and her companion, Miss Richards, on the other. It is a mile and a quarter, we are told,

to the place of execution. All the dreary way there is prayer and praise. An unparalleled crowd throngs the thoroughfares. One hundred Methodists form a procession and sing hymns all the way. Passing up Mansfield Road the procession halts at Gallows Hill, situated on an elevated corner of Sherwood Forest. There stood the grim scaffold on which hundreds of convicts had been done to death. From its transverse beam. another piece of rope was swaving in the air. The cart was drawn under it and the ropes tied together. Some of the death tragedies enacted here were horrible in the extreme. There was horror enough in this case truly, with thousands gazing on the scene; but how was it relieved from the darker side of its gloom by the calm self-possession and radiant, spiritual joy of the poor young creature who had made her artless confession and now witnessed to all who could hear her voice, her deep sense of sin, her certainty of full and free forgiveness, and her confident hope of heaven. There was no rescue, although in Adam Bede the last moment brings one. Here, however, in real life, nothing of the kind takes place. The cart is drawn forward and the body of Mary Voce is left suspended from the beam. But with her last breath she cried : "Glory to God, glory, glory !"



ILAM HALL, ILAM, STAFFS, Formerly the residence of the late Rt. Hon. R. W. Hanbury. Built for Mr. Jesse Watts Russell, J.P., by Mr. Win. Evans, of Ellastone.



CHAPTER XII

DINAH MORRIS—THE MISSION-PREACHER WOOED AND WON BY SETH BEDE

"Is there call for a loving servant, A messenger swift for Thee, A bearer of glad, good tidings? Here am I, Lord; send me."

ABOUT the trial, conversion, and execution, of the convict, Mary Voce, a ballad was published, which is preserved in the Nottingham Date Book. Though it has no literary merit and is but doggerel. I think it is worthy of being re-published because it affords independent testimony to the accuracy of the story told in Dinah Morris's autobiography, and is an evidence of the deep interest excited by the case of Mary Voce among the Methodist people in Nottingham. The Date Book is a vivid historic chronicle of passing events and is often most graphic in its narratives. It gives a good deal of space to the many executions at Gallows Hill, and among the rest to that of Mary It expresses warm commendation of the bold Voce. and beneficent efforts to benefit the culprit which were made by Miss Richards, Dinah Morris and others. The pcem begins with her emergence from the town gaol and then portrays the execution :--

"When Mary from the prison came, A crowd had gathered round; But she was not dismayed, for now Her heart true peace had found.

Made happy in the love of God, Calmly she took her leave; Jesus had eased her of her load, She now disdained to grieve.



ST. MARY'S CHURCH, NOTTINGHAM.

Her quickened soul so joyful was, So nerved by heavenly hope, So eager for the awful change, She helped to fix the rope!

Nor did she dread the thought to die, When she was led away; Her heavenly looks did testify It was a joyful day.

How eager were those pious souls, Who did on her attend, To point her to the Lamb of God, The sinner's only Friend. Ah, how they mourned for her distress With pity tried and true; Their weak endeavours God did bless And owned their labours too. All in a moment, as they praved, Her rapt'rous voice exclaimed: 'O, what has Jesus done for me? My soul He has reclaimed. He breaks my chains and sets me free, God does His love impart; My load of guilt is gone, I feel The pardon on my heart.' When to the fatal tree arrived, 'Mary, we're here,' said one; 'Well, bless the Lord,' she then replied In a triumphant tone. Then to the standers-by she said, 'I pray you warning take; Although I hang upon this tree, Jesus, my soul will take.'

And when the fatal cap was drawn, She must no longer stay:'Glory, glory,' still she cried, And then was launched away.''

" Is this not a brand plucked from the fire? Glory, glory be to Jesus."

Of the thousands who gazed at the execution of Mary Voce, it would never occur to any of them that the scene enacted before their eyes, related by one of the actors in the tragedy, would fasten upon the plastic genius of a great author and take its place in one of the finest fictions ever given to the world. Let

it be remembered, however, that Mary Voce is entirely different from Hetty Sorrel. Between the one and the other there is little semblance. The dread experiences of Mary Voce supply but the barest outline of suggestion—that is all. The vain, fascinating farmer's niece, Hetty, moves in quite another



TOWN GAOL IN NOTTINGHAM, IN WHICH MARY VOCE (HETTY SORREL) WAS INCARCERATED.

plane and is of entirely different mould. The tragedy of the former was but the peg on which the story of the latter was hung, nevertheless, it is Mary Voce. and in all likelihood another unnamed person, who served to

suggest to the author her character of Hetty Sorrel. Be this as it may, the experiences won in the prison and at the execution had a most potent influence on the mind of Dinah Morris. This she sets before us in emphatic and simple language :—

"At this awful spot (Gallows Hill) I lost a great deal of the fear of man, which, to me, had been a great hindrance for a long time. I felt that if God would send me to the uttermost parts of the earth I would go, and at intervals felt I could embrace a martyr's flames. Oh! this burning love of God, what will it not endure? I could not think I had an enemy in the world. I am certain I enjoyed that salvation, that if they had smote me on the one cheek I could have turned to them the other also. I lived

> 'The life of Heaven above, All the life of glorious love.'

I seemed to myself to live betwixt heaven and earth. I was not in heaven because of my body, nor upon earth because of my soul; earth was a scale* to heaven, and all I tasted was God. I could pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks. If I wanted to know anything, I only had to ask and it was given, generally in a moment. Whether I was in the public street, or at my work, or in my private room, I had continual intercourse with my God, and many, I think I may say hundreds, of times, He shone upon his Word, and showed me the meaning thereof so as to furnish me with sufficient matter to speak to poor sinners for a suitable length of time."

A good deal came to be made of Dinah Morris's experiences in the prison cell and at the gallows-tree. On the day of the execution Halifax Place Chapel was crowded for special service. The superintendent minister, Mr. Kane, preached to the people, and Mr. Taft, the second minister, who had taken some part in the prison ministrations, gave a narrative illustrating

* A series of steps, a means of ascending.

the work of Divine grace on the mind of the doomed sufferer. Dinah Morris's name got abroad among the Methodists, and an invitation was brought to her to go to Tutbury, for the purpose of relating her experiences and conducting religious services. The spirit in entered on this mission was which she truly friends had apostolic. Some brought the invitation to her at the Halifax letter of Place love-feast, whereupon she determined to "I clearly saw that my time was come, accept it. and that I must go, not conferring with flesh and I fixed the time to be there, and a local blood. preacher published it for me to speak. What I felt that day I can never describe, I could neither sit nor stand, the worth of souls was so laid upon me. I believe I felt something of the passion of my blessed Lord, but He supported me. I likewise saw in the night-seasons the places I must speak in, the roads to some of those places, the people I must speak to, and the things on which I must stand, together with the opposition I must meet with." This kind of second sight accompanied her through life. There are many incidents narrated concerning her inward foreshadowing of things which were to happen to her. She had a kind of prophetic vision of events relating to her work which is well attested, and we need not suppose that such experiences are peculiar to Dinah Morris. With some finely-wrought souls there are mystic powers which carry them into a realm above the commonplace experiences of life, and there may be in all of us possibilities of mental impression which we have scarcely fathomed as yet. There lies within and around us a spiritual universe of mystery and wonder which we have not fully explored. Dinah Morris was now

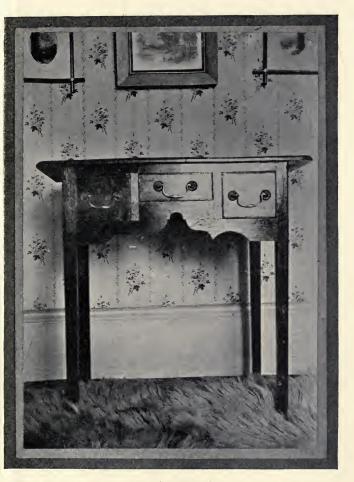


TABLE MADE BY SAMUEL EVANS (SETH BEDE) NEARLY A CENTURY AGO.



living in a sphere of profound and ecstatic feeling. Her spiritual exercises were of the most exalted character, and the invitation to Tutbury served to intensify them. It was in a whirl of rapturous excitement she started on her way. She halted at Derby to visit her Methodist friends there. To this place she had travelled by coach, for there were no railways then. Here she had new manifestations. Of one of them she says : "I retired again (for prayer) and how long I continued I do not know, but the Lord was pleased to show me His glory in such a manner as He had never done before. The room was filled with angels and my soul with the glory of God. I felt

> 'The speechless awe that dares not move, And all the silent heaven of love.'

I went on my way rejoicing to the place appointed."

Doubtless this place would be Tutbury. It would seem that the invitation which had been sent to her did not emanate from the official authorities in the Burton-on-Trent Circuit, to which Tutbury belonged, nor had it been endorsed by them, and even from the first there was opposition. The young minister and the Circuit Steward busied themselves to hinder her They did not wholly succeed, but they conwork. trived to raise a tempest, to excite suspicion and generate antipathy. Four months were spent in this evangelistic mission. Dinah Morris was gladly welcomed by the simple-hearted Methodist folk in many places of the Burton Circuit, but was everywhere pursued by the disaffected officials. Her meetings were held in chapels, farmhouses, cottages, and often in the open air. "Many were brought to the Lord in the Burton Circuit who nobly stood by their Master's cause, and some have fallen asleep in Jesus, among whom you may find a Mr. John Ordish, in the July Magazine, 1822. Those were blessed days. I can scarcely think of them without weeping." But the opposition at last prevailed. With some strait-laced persons the best of work must be discounted if it be not done after their preconceived pattern. There is good evidence that the people she had laboured among would gladly have retained her, but the Circuit was being embroiled and she meekly returned, smarting in spirit, to her daily occupation as a lace-mender, and was cordially welcomed by her employers.

There were well-to-do friends who offered her shelter and comfort, if she would only tarry with them. One family, in which a home was offered, resided in the familiar hamlet of Griffy Dam. Another home was set before her which was situated in the Leek Circuit, in Staffordshire, showing that her fame had already travelled far. Here a Mr. Gould, of Brown Hill, was her would-be host. On examining a Brief History of the Rise and Progress of Methodism in the Leek Circuit. by the Rev. J. B. Dyson, I found the name of this same Mr. R. Gould, of Brown Hill, and discovered that he was a farmer in the parish of Warslow, that he was a devoted Methodist, and cherished a church in his own house. Dinah Morris would not accept these offers of gratuitous hospitality. She was too self-reliant and independent to admit of such a thinghence her return to Nottingham. She shall speak for herself .

"I had a great desire to go to the heathen and preach to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. And if I had had a sufficient fortune I certainly should have gone; but I had not, and that was the hindrance, as I disliked nothing so much as

living upon the people. I used to work at my mending of lace till two or three o'clock in the morning, that I might be furnished with money and clothes that I might not be a burden to anyone. This I did with great pleasure. I had one of the best places in the town. I had very good wages and could earn



ILAM CROSS. Monument to Mrs. Watts Russell

fourteen or fifteen shillings a week, and did not, as some may have supposed, go out for loaves and fishes, nor for a husband, as I then believed I should never be married to anyone. No, Christ was 'all the world to me.'"

Soon after the Tutbury episode she received an invitation to preach in Ashbourne-probably in the summer To her and Seth Bede this was a memorof 1802 It is at this time we find Dinah Morris able visit. introduced to the district with which her life was thenceforward to be so closely associated. For travellers Ashbourne is the gate of Dovedale. Its magnificent parish church is called the cathedral of the George Eliot says it is one of the finest parish Peak. churches in the country. It is a stately sanctuary. chaste and beautiful. Easily reached from Ashbourne. and, close by the entrance to Dovedale, there is one of the most charming and picturesque villages in England. Its name is Ilam. In the newspapers it has recently come into notice, because it was there that the late Mr. R. W. Hanbury, M.P., had his country seat. and there, after his lamented death in London, his body was conveyed to its burial.

Ilam Hall was built for its former proprietor, Mr. Jesse Watts Russell, J.P., by one William Evans, a nephew of Adam Bede, who succeeded to the business of builder, which the uncle had originated in Ellastone. The hall is a fine piece of work and occupies a romantic situation. The estate attached to it includes one side of Dovedale. Among its rock scenery is the collection of The Twelve Apostles, and the perpendicular block, draped with ivy, which goes by the name of Dovedale Church. There is a cross and fountain in the village erected to the memory of Mrs. Watts Russell, a lady who, in a more exalted sphere of life,



ILAM CHURCH ROCK, OR 'DOVEDALE CHURCH,' DOVEDALE.



cherished the philanthropic sympathies which were so marked a feature in the life of Dinah Morris. How well I recollect the lamentations of the whole country-side over her early decease. Her husband caused the cool, clear water, taken from springs in the limestone rocks of the overshadowing hill, to be conveyed to a fountain in the centre of the village, over which a pure Gothic monument was erected as her memorial. The sparkling liquid bubbles up in never-failing supply, and here is the lady's epitaph :

"Free as for all these crystal waters flow, Her gentle eyes would weep for others' woe; Dried is that fount, but long may this endure, To be a well of comfort to the poor."

It is quite probable that, during her first visit to Ashbourne, Dinah Morris preached at Ellastone, as portrayed in Adam Bede, and that this visit was the occasion of the preaching on the village green at Hayslope. It is likely that she also ministered at Snelstone, but it is quite certain that she conducted services at Ashbourne and attracted large congregations. The old Methodist Chapel, as I remember it sixty years ago, is now a seed warehouse, and there is a modern church in another part of the town where the Methodists of these days assemble. The associations of the old building are still very sacred, and it was in connection with the church which for many years had its home therein, that Dinah Morris commenced her blessed labours in these parts. Wirksworth, and the villages surrounding it, the scene of life-long labours, lies just over the hills, a few miles away. It was at Ashbourne that Seth Bede's heart was won, as he him-

self shall tell us. "The members of my class (at Snelsstone) invited me to go to Ashbourne to hear a very pious female, Elizabeth Tomlinson (Dinah Morris), of Nottingham. Truly it may be said of her that she was a burning and shining light. She preached with great



PARISH CHURCH, ASHBOURNE (OAKEOURNE).

power and unction to a very large congregation. Her doctrine was clear and good, and her piety unrivalled; simplicity, love and meekness were blended in her, and her whole heart was in her work. She was made instrumental in the conversion of many we know, but the morning of the resurrection will reveal more."

We are compelled to believe that the visit of Dinah was protracted, and that Seth had more than one opportunity to see, to wonder and admire. We may feel sure that it was not with him, as Robert Burns confesses it was in his case, with regard to another young lady:

> "In preachin' time sae meek she stan's, Sae saintly and sae bonnie, O; I canna get a glimpse o' grace, For stealing looks at Nannie, O."

Seth missed no spiritual grace in his manly passion for Dinah, and their controversy about marrying was the only one they ever had. Her primary notion was that she should give herself unreservedly to Christian service, which was her controlling passion. It was no part of her life-plan to be encumbered with family ties. She thought she had, like some other women she knew, a loftier call. In answer to all this Seth was able to plead the grave hindrances which had impeded her mission in the Burton Circuit. To Dinah Morris this had been a bitter experience. Seth was in full sympathy with her heavenly call. He would stand between her gentle soul and the chill blast of official opposition. He would be her brave knight, her chivalrous Greatheart, her glad fellow-worker in all Christian service. He could toil for their joint livelihood at his own smart handicraft as a carpenter and joiner, and she could have full liberty to preach the gospel and win souls. In one of my journeys to Wirksworth I was shown a table actually made by Seth Bede, a little later than this period of his history, and it is still strong and beautiful, now carried off to the north of England by a Derbyshire young lady as part of her

marriage portion. Dinah at last gave heed to Seth's plea, though not without some misgivings, and he himself shall tell the story of their union :

"When I was twenty-six we were united in holy matrimony at St. Mary's Church, Nottingham. I found her a help-meet in spiritual things as well as in temporal matters, and she very often stirred up the gift of God within me. She did me good and not evil all the days of her life. She laboured more abun-



OLD WESLEYAN CHAPEL, ASHBOURNE (OAKBOURNE).

dantly than I, and held up my hands very often in the good work. Wherever she went she preached the glad tidings to sinners, ever ready to do her Master's will. Indeed, it was her meat and drink. She never neglected her domestic duties, she was clever and industrious, a good wife, and an exceeding tender-hearted mother. I very much regret that her holy and valuable life was not printed, as her gifts and graces were great and extraordinary."

This is Seth Bede's view of it after their marriage

had subsisted in unbroken charity for forty-six years, and after nine years of widowerhood; and we have Dinah Morris's view also, after twenty-two years of their united life. She says:

"I could not see my way to marry, and only eternity can clear up this point to me; however, I am fully persuaded that I could not have had a more suitable companion, as he loved the Lord's blessed work from his heart, and did not only preach himself, but made every way he possibly could for me. Blessed be the Lord, I felt the very day I married, as though I married not; I was able to pursue my way, and at every convenient opportunity to speak in the name of the Lord. I met with very little persecution or opposition when I had a friend to plead my cause. The work of God broke out, and we had most powerful times."

Never was there more perfect oneness between wedded souls than between Seth Bede and Dinah Morris.

CHAPTER XIII

HOLY WORK OF A WEDDED PAIR

"So many gods so many creeds, So many paths that wind and wind, While just the art of being kind Is all this sad world needs."

IT seems necessary to make some mention of the manifest discrepancy between fiction and fact as to the marriage of Dinah Morris. In real life Seth was the happy bridegroom-not Adam; while in Adam Bede we have the unfolding of a story which is clean contrary. How is this? Well, first of all, our book does not profess to give us a veritable history. It purports to be fiction and nothing else. The discrepancy is simply a matter Adam Bede was produced under the affectionof art. ate censorship of one of the keenest literary critics of the time. He read the sheets as they came from the writer's hand. As the novel was approaching its concluding chapters his criticism was, that during the earlier portion Adam stood in the forefront, but now had receded into the background of the picture, while Dinah Morris had come to the fore. In order to restore Adam to prominence as the author's proper hero, he must needs be wedded to the gentle Dinah, who had become the undoubted heroine. Accordingly this was done. A moment's reflection will show that this

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PREACHERS' PLAN IN THE DERBY WESLEYAN CIRCUIT.



HOLY WORK OF A WEDDED PAIR

reversal of fact does violence to the narrative. Some of the most competent critics are of opinion that it does violence also to the truer canons of literary art, and is a blot on the story. Since situations in fiction are too readily accepted as historical fact, some injustice has been done both to Seth and Dinah. It has been asserted that, in her real history, Dinah Morris, after her early years of Methodist ardour and enthusiasm, settled down to a quiet life as the wife of Adam, and eventually abandoned her preaching altogether. In the novel, too, we take farewell of Seth as the humble lodger in the married home of the woman whom he had introduced into the family, had loved with his whole heart and soul, and meekly surrendered to his more imperious brother, while he tamely accepts the position of hobby-horse to the young Adam, who equally, with others, tyrannises over the passive and vielding Seth. All this is contrary to fact.

While these chapters have been going through the press, an able writer, commenting on them, has first assumed that the facts of Dinah's marriage agreed with the fiction, and has then based his judgment on that supposition. Hence, it cannot be too emphatically asserted that, in actual life Adam never sought the hand of Dinah at all, but had been married to his first wife, Harriet Poynton, some time before Dinah had become known to the family. Whatever may be told us in fiction, I am well assured that the real Adam was never in the least degree likely to yield himself the victim of a passion for any woman who accepted the role of a preaching evangelist. Even thus, though we may regret the situation created for us, we have no ground for complaint. In the selection of our book we bargained for fiction, and this is the thing we have got.

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In this case, however, the fiction has created such wide and deep interest that for many years past all manner of efforts have been made to ferret out the facts. Perhaps no novel has ever given rise to a greater number of efforts of this character. They are practically numberless. Probably in no such case have a larger number of inaccurate statements appeared in print. We shall find that Dinah did not cease her evangelistic labours after her marriage, while Seth, on his part, was faithful to his promise to foster and promote her God-blessed ministry. This was not altogether an easy thing to do. Methodism has always looked for godly submission on the part of its adherents. Just as Dinah's preaching gifts had come into prominence, the Wesleyan Conference promulgated a judgment which was strongly antagonistic to female preaching. This was in the year 1803. The minute recorded was specific and discouraging. It is stated in the form of question and answer. "Should women be permitted to preach among us? We are of opinion in general that they ought not." Reasons are hereto alleged, one being that a vast majority of the Methodist people were opposed to the practice, and another that it was not required. "But if any woman among us think she has an extraordinary call from God to speak in public (and we are sure that it must be an extraordinary call that can authorise it), we are of the opinion she should, in general, address her own sex, and those only, and upon this condition alone should any woman be permitted to preach in any part of our Connexion."

Following this deliverance there is a set of stringent regulations, under which alone could this carefully circumscribed ministry be exercised. In the face of this minute of the Conference it required both courage

HOLY WORK OF A WEDDED PAIR

and judgment on the part of Seth Bede, as a loyal Methodist, to make arrangements continually for the exercise of her preaching powers by his gifted and zealous wife—Dinah Morris. The Conference placed



HARLEM TAPE WORKS, MILLHOUSES, WIRKSWORTH, FOUNDED BY
SAMUEL EVANS (SETH BEDE) 1814.
"It's a bleak and barren country there." Adam Bede, Chap. iii.

upon such ministry as hers the stamp of irregularity. Nevertheless that ministry went on. When she came to the parish of Norbury it would appear that the Methodist flock at Snelstone received her with warm affection. Meetings were held at Roston as well, and soon they extended their efforts to Ellastone and other places.

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It is very pleasing to read in Seth Bede's account of his life of the remarkable interest which followed the labours of his devoted wife on her settlement at Norbury. She has also described it in glowing and grateful terms : "We had most powerful times, many were brought into peace, and I believe the whole village had a powerful call. We had access to several fresh places, and societies were formed. We could bear them record that they would have plucked out their eyes and would have given them to us. We were with them in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in fastings too, of which I am not ashamed to speak." Knowing, as I do from infancy, the spirit, conversation and method of the life depicted in this paragraph, I have no difficulty in realising how incessant or how exhausting was the voluntary toil in which Seth Bede and Dinah Morris engaged in his native parish of Norbury and in the places round about. Wherever she came she immediately identified herself with the ignorant, the needy, the sinful and afflicted. The sick she made her charge and the needy her friends. She sought out both the suffering and the lost, and spared herself neither toil nor sacrifice in her efforts to do them good. It was not an occasional spasm of sympathy, it was lifelong devotion. The simple, honest villagers had never seen it after that fashion, and their warm hearts responded, as human spirits always will, to the gentle touch of tender, Christ-like love.

To the picture of their labours in this neighbourhood, drawn for us by Dinah Morris, there is a companion sketch in the autobiography of Seth Bede. His account was written long years after the event, but even at eighty years of age his thankful soul recalled its memory with glowing gladness and fervent praise.

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"We had not been married long before a blessed work broke out at Roston and Snelstone. The holy fire ran through our class-meetings and prayer-meetings seven or eight would find peace at every meeting. I



HOUSE OF SAMUEL AND ELIZABETH EVANS (SETH BEDE AND DINAH MORRIS) AT MILLHOUSES, WIRKSWORTH.

"It was a thatched cottage outside the town, a little way from the mill-an old cottage standing sideways towards the road, with a little bit of potato-ground before it." Adam Bede, Chap. xxxviii.

well remember one man, an overseer of the poor. He was so powerfully wrought upon and got so happy that he called out in the meeting : 'What is Love? What is Love?' He could neither sit, stand, nor kneel, he was so filled with the love of God. He kept his piety, and afterwards died a very happy death. They were a very loving, united people, and would have done anything for us."

But Seth Bede must needs leave Norbury. There was more scope for energy in a brisk and flourishing town like Derby than amidst the rustic surroundings in his native place. To the great sorrow of his Methodist friends they had to say farewell. It was a tender and pathetic parting, and rent warm hearts on either side. The husband, however, felt that the time had new come for him to enter into business on his own account, and therefore to Derby they went. In this town, for the next seven years—from 1807 to 1814—Seth Bede pursued his calling as carpenter and builder.

Here the same course of Christian toil was followed both by husband and wife as had been practised in the neighbourhood of Norbury. Beyond this fact, I have but few particulars of their labours in the Derby Circuit. A friend, however, who has written very ably in the Methodist Recorder about Derby Methodism has lent me a plan of the Circuit for the half-year ending in October, 1809. In this plan, contrary to the usual custom, the places are numbered instead of the preachers, and the appointments follow the preachers' names. Here a full share of engagements is allotted to "S. Evans." In the majority of cases it would be understood that, in his appointments, two preachers would appear instead of one. We have an interesting and an independent testimony to the power and usefulness of this consecrated pair at the time of their residence in Derby by one of the shrewdest observers of those days-the Rev. Hugh Bourne, the founder of the Primitive Methodist Connexion. In his jounrals he records how that the husband and wife came over from Derby and joined him in some mission services in the



THE OLD WESLEYAN CHAPEL, CROMFORD.



hamlet of Wootton. His standard of spiritual attainments was exceedingly high, nevertheless he shows himself to be both amazed and gratified at the mighty power which accompanied the united ministrations of Seth Bede and Dinah Morris. Here are the terms he uses concerning them : "Sunday, June 25th, 1809. I led the class in the morning at Wootton. We were informed that Betsy Evans, Samuel Evans's wife, from Derby, would speak at Wootton in the afternoon. Her husband also is a local preacher. She began about two o'clock-her voice was low and hoarse at first, from having preached so much the week past; but she got well into the power. She appears to be very clear in spiritual doctrines and ever ready in scripture, and speaks full in the Spirit. From the little I saw of her she appears to be as fully devoted to God as any woman I ever met with. O, Lord, help her, and establish her! Her husband also spoke. He appears to be an excellent man. O, my Father, bless and keep him."

So powerful an impression was made on Hugh Bourne's mind, that when, on a journey to see his relatives in May, 1810, he had occasion to pass through Derby, he called on the Evans', both going and returning. Two entries concerning this visit are recorded in his journal. Monday 19th : "I came to Derby and called on Samuel Evans; his wife is earnest." Wednesday, 21st : "I came to Derby and had some conversation with Mr. Samuel Evans and his wife. He is an earnest man. She has been, and is, an extraordinary woman; she has been very near Ann Cutler's experience; but she met with great persecution especially from the Rev. J. E. I was much instructed by her conversation." I remember Hugh Bourne quite well, and heard him preach on several occasions. Full justice has never been done to this extraordinary character. For Christian simplicity of life, unconquerable perseverance, dogged zeal, self-sacrificing labour, sublime courage and heroic endurance as a revival evangelist, he has seldom been equalled in the annals of the Church of God. It is therefore all the more interesting to me that such an one should have been so deeply impressed by the spiritual power and holy conversation of Seth Bede and Dinah Morris. In his estimation, Dinah was a rare spiritual phenomenon and a woman of exceeding power.

It was in Derby that Dinah Morris made the acquaintance of that truly great woman Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, and of the lady philanthropist known as Lady Lucy Smith.

After seven years' residence in Derby there was another change. Seth Bede invented a power loom for the weaving of sundry wares, such as braids, tapes, and laces, which heretofore had been only wrought by hand. Along with two partners he now became proprietor of a factory, which, happily, is going still, and has been several times extended. The question was as to where the manufactory should be planted. Through conducting special services there, both Seth and Dinah had become acquainted with the ancient and romantically situated town of Wirksworth. They had formed affectionate relations with the Methodist people of the neighbourhood, and as there was an eligible mill, with water power, ready for their occupation at Millhouses about half a mile outside the town. to Wirksworth they came; the place being chosen on spiritual considerations as well as temporal. From this time onward Wirksworth was the centre of the life and work of this devoted pair. The factory is for ever

& Boral Arcachers' Man for the Nord's Day, CIRCUTT, 1820. のいいの **CALFORD** BORD . BU INTANT 24 14

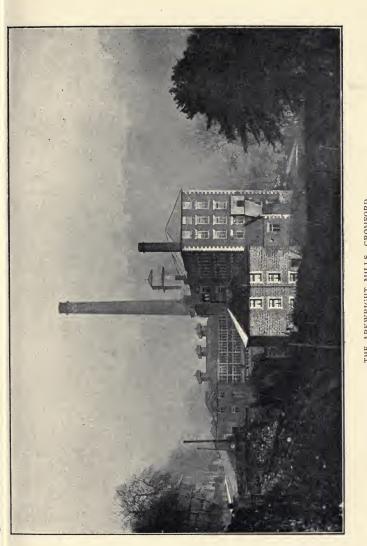
PLAN OF THE CROMFORD WESLEYAN CIRCUIT.



associated with their history. The thatched house of six rooms, just across the Derby road, was the home of such life as was rarely seen in any family. Its particulars were first revealed to me by my own mother, who had often been a visitor there, by the two daughters of these devoted souls, and by several of their servants and workpeople. Imagine the sacredness and blessedness of Sunday in that peaceful home. Every preparation has been made beforehand for its due observance. One of these is rare indeed. Look in at the parlour table on the Saturday night. There you will find volumes of sacred learning arranged in order for use on the morrow. Among them are copies of the Holy Scriptures, Wesley's Hymns, a Bible Dictionary, Cruden's Concordance, and in great leatherbound volumes there are Benson's and Clarke's Commentaries. Here was the apparatus for Sunday morning selection and study. The séance would often commence as early as four in the morning. A cup of refreshing tea was first partaken and then the study commenced. Portions of Scripture were selected and modes of treatment discussed. The great commentaries were pondered, and God's blessing invoked on the various exercises of the day. As seven o'clock approaches you see neighbours coming to the house for a class-meeting. This Christian home is a Bethel indeed.' At eight o'clock the family assembles for worship and breakfast. At nine there is a second class-meeting. At ten the children of the neighbourhood come into the factory to be taught in a Sunday School by Seth Bede and several helpers. As for Dinah Morris, she, at this hour, walks to Wirksworth to meet another class. The morning duties over, the family assembles for the mid-day meal at twelve o'clock.

With all this activity care is taken that there shall also be, of set purpose, a little time set apart for private communion with God. The afternoon brings with it new engagements. I have before me a plan of the Cromford Circuit for 1820, lent me by a kind friend whose uncle was one of the preachers " on trial." Tn this case the places occupy the first column, and the preachers have their several numbers for convenient "S. Evans" stands as No. 7, and to him reference. are allotted engagements for twenty-one out of the twenty-six Sundays displayed on the plan. This was a very large share of the work for a local preacher. Nor was this all. Engagements were often made to take services where fresh ground could be broken. All this involved much walking to and fro. The early afternoon would see the happy itinerants on their way to Cromford, Bonsall, Crich, Tansley, Middleton, or some other place in the Circuit. Seth Bede tells us that his beloved never complained of either the distances, the weather, or the roads, but laboured on with gladness and good cheer till strength failed her and her mission was fulfilled. And yet, how far this was from being the whole of her labours will never on earth be told. Weekly worship was held in the factory in the masters' time, at which he or she or other helpers preached to the workers.

Besides all this public service, the whole countryside shared the blessedness of Dinah's private ministrations. From the various classes were raised up preachers of the Gospel and missionaries of the Cross. One day in each week she devoted to the visitation of her members in three several classes. Cromford, over the Stonnis Rocks, where the brown gritstone is thrown up bodily in the midst of surrounding limestone, was one



THE ARKWRIGHT MILLS, CRONFORD. "Look at Arkwright's Mills there at Cromford; a man must learn summat beside Gospel to make them things, I reckon."—*Adam Bode*, Chap. i.



of the places at which she frequently preached. The old chapel is still a prominent feature in the landscape. One aged worshipper remains who remembers Dinah's preaching quite distinctly. Arkwright's Mills, under another name, are still a picturesque variant in a romantic setting, and are mentioned in Adam Bede. Millhouses, Miller's Green, Gorsey Bank, Bole Hill and Wirksworth were the scenes of her care and efforts, which were really unceasing. As a sick visitor her gentle tact and spiritual feeling made her pre-eminently useful. Sorrow and suffering were lightened at her approach, and divine praises waited on her footsteps and kindled in her path. Often she was nurse as well as sick visitor, and instances are freely given of her taking her place beside the weary sufferer and watching the whole night long. In holiest yearning her compassionate heart ever turned to the wretched and the lost, and if any poor young soul had been led astray, Dinah Morris would lovingly seek her out and earnestly strive to lead her to the only place for the sinful soul-the feet of Jesus. Her many ways of doing good cannot now be told. For more than thirty years she pursued her course in Wirksworth and its neighbourhood. For evermore has she linked her name with this picturesque and quaint old town. Tt is a blessed history. I do not wonder that one building stands there to-day as a "Bede Memorial Chapel, erected to the glory of God, and in memory of Elizabeth Evans, immortalised as Dinah Morris," nor do I wonder that in the Wesleyan Ebenezer Chapel there is a white marble tablet which may be left to tell its story in this volume. God grant that many women who read these pages may be stirred up to follow Dinah's example in using time, talent and energy in imparting

blessing to multitudes, and in winning high reward in the kingdom of heaven. The marble tablet credits Dinah Morris with seventy-four years; I can only make them to number seventy-three.



BEDE MEMORIAL CHAPEL, WIRKSWORTH (SNOWFIELD). "The town lay, grim, stony, unsheltered up the side of a steep hill." Adam Bede, Chap. xxxviii.





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MEMORIAL TABLET TO DINAH MORRIS IN EBENEZER WESLEYAN CHAPEL, WIRKSWORTH (SNOWFIELD).

CHAPTER XIV

LIFE'S LABOUR FOLLOWED BY SABBATIC REST AND PEACE

"Through love to light! Oh, wonderful the way That leads from darkness to the perfect day— From darkness and from sorrow of the night To morning that comes singing over the sea! Through love to light!"

" In the course of these last twenty years I have many times been brought apparently nigh unto death, insomuch that my dear friends have stood expecting me to die. At all such times I have been visited with a manifestation of the divine approbation concerning these things (her public ministry), but what grieves me most is that I have had so little zeal and love, and that I have not been more useful and holy."

In these solemn words does Dinah Morris close her autobiography, as written in 1825. They well represent the whole spirit of her gracious life. How many incidents have those who knew her related to me, setting forth her genuine self-denial, intense loving-kindness and brave daring in the prosecution of her work. Here is one related by Mr. A. Chadwick. When but a boy he and a schoolfellow, for one day only, played truant. Toward the evening a mighty storm arose. The thunders shook the earth, while the lightnings

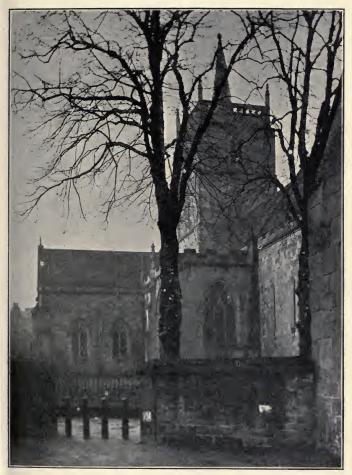
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flamed in the sky. The two boys were near to the house which sheltered Dinah Morris. She called them in to take refuge with her. Both of them shook with solemn dread and cowered around her knees. Instantly she became their comforter, spoke soothing words and implored Heaven's blessing. With a hand on each prostrate head she sang in a clear and sympathetic voice :

> "The God that rules on high. That thunders when He please; That rides upon the stormy sky, And manages the seas: This awful God is ours, Our Father and our Love; He will send down His heavenly powers To carry us abovc."

I think this incident forms a pretty little idyll and is worthy of record here.

Old Benjamin Poyser, in 1881, gave me a story of Dinah, indicative of shrewd, practical wisdom combined with strong human feeling. Poyser was a workman at the factory and was making love to the servant at the factory house. "Benjamin," she said, "if you and —— wish to talk to each other I have no objection, and you are always welcome to a yard of the hearthstone. Don't walk in the lanes after dark, and don't use your Sundays for courtship. You are always welcome to come and see —— in the kitchen." This courtship led to a happy life union. Poyser remembered Seth Bede opening the factory at Millhouses, and himself became a worker at nine years of age! He said Seth Bede was one of a thousand for forgiving injuries. If one had done him a wrong he would go out of his way to do such person a kindness. If men



PARISH CHURCH, WIRKSWORTH (SNOWFIELD). ". . . (Snowfield) that bare heap o' stones as the very crows fly over an' won't stop at." Mrs. Poyser, Chap. xliv.



had animosity one to another he would go and reason with them, and so make peace. The mill-pond and feeder contained fine Derbyshire trout. Every Whitsuntide the water was run out and many fish captured. The workmen were always invited to bring their baskets and share in the catch. Seth Bede also was a diligent visitor of the sick as well as his wife, and when no longer able to go forth on his preaching excursions this exercise found him delightful employment. Friends interested in his house-to-house mission assisted him in supplying the material necessities of the poor, and so calmly and usefully life lengthened to its close. It was a beautiful and blessed life.

Dinah had dreams and visions, intuitions and impressions of a preternatural kind. She moved in a world of spiritual influences all her own. A lady I met with in Buxton revived the recollection of a story my mother had told me when a boy. In one of her dreams Dinah imagined herself preaching in a place which was strange to her. She saw the building, and marked the features and even the dresses of many of the hearers. A sweet spring of bright, sparkling water appeared to her view, from which a stream issued, and, wherever the waters came, the country was covered with green and flowers. Immediately after two men came from a mining village to implore her to go and hold special services there because of the spiritual dearth and drunkenness that prevailed. She consented and fixed the time for the services. The distance was too far to walk, and she was driven to and fro by Isaac Walker, one of the factory men, who was himself an acceptable local preacher. Immediately on beholding the scene of her labours the dream recurred to her, and on entering the building she saw in actual vision the very faces she had looked upon in her dream. The happy augury of the waters was graciously fulfilled in the impartation of spiritual blessing, for, before the day's services had closed, a deep movement had commenced which extended as the days went on. She had to go again and again, and several adjoining villages were touched by the revival.

Another incident was narrated by my Buxton friend. Dinah Morris was ill of acute rheumatism and was so prostrate that she could not turn herself on her bed. But the time was at hand for the fulfilment of an engagement to conduct special services at Bakewell. She was deeply distressed at the thought of her incapacity, and wrestled with God all night in earnest prayer. She obtained from the Lord Himself, as she believed, the power to go and fulfil her mission. Nothing could now restrain her. Her faith conquered her infirmity. She was again entrusted to the care of the faithful Isaac Walker, conducted two services with great spiritual power, and on the return journey was not spared a downpour which drenched her to the skin. Nevertheless, it was her proud boast that no injury resulted from this bold venture, and the rheumatic fever had departed for ever. How real to her sensitive feeling was the living God, and how near! How transcendent was the power of prayer! available at all times and in all exigencies.

My Buxton friend had very clear recollections of the extended visit paid to Wirksworth by George Eliot, mentioned in an earlier chapter. She repeatedly saw the aunt and niece, arm-in-arm, walking across the market-place to call on Mrs. Walker, Dinah Morris's daughter. She knew well of the long *séance* in Mrs. Walker's parlour, when George Eliot wrote down the



HOUSE OF MR SAMUEL EVANS, JUNR., IN THE MARKET PLACE, WIRKSWORTH (SNOWFIELD) AT WHICH GEORGE ELIOT WAS RECEIVED AS A GUEST.

"... the brethren and sisters at Snowfield who are favoured with very little of this world's good: where the trees are few, so that a child might count them, and there's very hard living for the poor in the winter." Adam Bede, Chap ii.



REST AND PEACE CAL FORM 249

account related to her of the aunt's strange experiences. On the occasion of this visit she was the guest of her cousin Mr. Samuel Evans, (the son of Seth Bede and Dinah Morris) who was a manufacturer of silk velvet and the proprietor of a draper's shop in the Wirksworth market-place. From this house every afternoon George Eliot found her way to Miller's Green, where Seth Bede and Dinah Morris were then residing. My informant could never have the slightest doubt as to how Dinah Morris came to be the heroine of Adam Bede.

One episode in the career of Seth and Dinah I do not like to dwell upon-their separation for several years from the Wesleyan Church. This event, which I cannot but regret, arose from the position in the denomination to which the female evangelist had been relegated, which had all along been a very sore point. Doubtless, the superintendent minister in each circuit had considerable discretion in the matter. Some of them interpreted the minute of 1803 more rigidly than others. Some still allowed the preaching, even in mixed congregations. Nevertheless, the fact that Mrs. Taft and Dinah Morris had been tolerated as preachers became an occasion of reproach and rebuke in the Conference, two of the highest personages in that assembly having taken up a very hostile attitude. The relation of Dinah Morris with her superintendent pastors would appear to have been most cordial. Still, female evangelism was all but proscribed, and this became a burden both to herself and her husband. In Derby there arose, through a split, a branch of Methodism which never extended far. nor did it attain to any great dimensions. This people called themselves "Arminian Methodists," they were

also known as the Derby Faith. They allowed full privileges to women preachers. Seth Bede and Dinah Morris united themselves to this secession, not because she was refused liberty to use her talents among the Methodist people; but because a stigma attached to woman's ministry, and she would not continue to use her privilege while others of her sex were for-For this reason the painful separation took bidden. place and continued for some years. I have before me a letter written to our friends in 1836 in the name of two female evangelists who were Arminian Methodists, and it is characterised by the same rapturous zeal which marked the life of Dinah Morris. It was written after a visit paid to Wirksworth. It would seem that Dinah Morris had full liberty of prophesying among the Arminian Methodists without any reservation whatever. There is an Arminian Methodist Preachers' Plan of the Derby Circuit extant, on which the name of "Evans, Wirksworth," appears. To which of the Evanses this relates one can hardly tell. Wirksworth was not one of the places in the Derby Circuit, or probably we should find that both names had been included. Probably, "Evans, Wirksworth," meant that Seth Bede was an auxiliary preacher of the Derby Circuit, having separate appointments on a plan which included Wirksworth. At all events, a building is pointed out at Warmbrook, in the town, which was for some years the Arminian Methodist Chapel. There Dinah Morris frequently preached, and there are those yet living who repeatedly heard her ministrations therein. It is now a wheelwright's workshop. In the course of only a few years the Wirksworth Arminian Methodists, as well as the body generally, were united with an offshoot of the Weslevan Body called "The

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ARMINIAN METHODIST PREACHERS' PLAN.



Methodist Association," which was originated in 1835, principally by one Dr. Warren, concerning the founding of Methodist Colleges. This denomination, later on, combined with the Methodist Reformers of 1849 to form the United Methodist Free Churches. Before this took place, however, Seth Bede and Dinah Morris had found their way back into the old moorings, and both of them died in communion with the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Her death was transcendently beautiful. It requires the pen of a George Eliot to do justice to it. For some three or four years her public ministrations had ceased for sheer lack of physical strength. Indeed, she was now over seventy years of age, and had toiled with unremitting energy for nearly half a century. Dr. Chalmers said that he wished for a sabbatic close to his life, just such as was given to his mother. This was granted Dinah Morris. How well I remember my mother describing to us what she saw at her death-bed. When the enthusiasms of active labour had ceased a sabbatic rest followed, and then came the end. There was no apparent disease, only a gradual fading away, with a spiritual experience little short of heaven itself. Long before this time she had attracted the attention of some of the great ones of the earth. A Mr. Foster, who knew her, a member of the Society of Friends, had reported her good works to that marvellous woman of kindred spirit, Mrs. Elizabeth Fry. 'This devoted philanthropic worker made a pilgrimage to Derbyshire that she might hold communion with Dinah Morris in This visit led to loving correspondence. experson. tending over several years. There was also one Lady Lucy Smith, a well-known Christian philanthropist, who also sought her out, delighted in her fellowship,"

and in like manner established a correspondence with her.

The end came in 1849. As it approached she manifested her resolute determination that all the material which any biographer might found memoirs upon should be ruthlessly destroyed. Her desire was that



SAMUEL GREEN'S TIMBER YARD, WATERHOUSES. Great Grandson of George Evans (Thias Bede.)

no word should be spoken or written in praise of the creature. Hence, with stern command she had several bundles of letters consumed before her eyes. There was one such bundle from Mrs. Fry, another from Lady Lucy Smith, another from sundry admiring friends, but all had to be destroyed. Another command was given. Her children were assembled around her bed when she commanded that no memorial should be erected about her grave, and that they should use their money for service to the living rather than in raising memorials to the dead. When she was laid in her coffin two gentlemen, strangers to the town, begged that they might be allowed to take a last look at her face. Thirty years previously they had gone to a service which she had conducted for the purpose of turning it to ridicule. While so engaged their minds were arrested, and they who came to sport remained to pray. There, in the presence of the dead, they together praised God for what she had been as a preacher of the gospel of love, and for the blessed life which they had found through her instrumentality.

I remember well my mother's description of Seth Bede's consolation and submission in a bereavement which took away from him one who, as George Eliot had said, had been as the light of his eyes for so long a period. On her account he said he could not shed one tear. He could only bless God for all she had been to him these forty-six years, and for all that she had been to so many others. Concerning her promotion and exaltation in the presence of her Lord, he could not entertain one moment's doubt. Her joy was fulfilled in beholding the glory of the Redeemer, and he was as sure of a speedy re-union with her as he was of her perfected bliss in Paradise. I was only a boy at the time, but I remember how the experiences of both Seth and Dinah struck me as a remarkable triumph of faith. Her body was laid to rest in the old churchyard at Wirksworth, the whereabouts has been pointed out to me, but the precise grave no man knoweth, for the register of this time is said to have been lost, and there is no monument. And yet, in a way of which she cannot have had the faintest conception, a monument, has been raised to her beloved memory, more

enduring than burnished brass, more pure than the whitest marble; a more ment wrought by the cunning skill of a niece she bound to well, a monument circumscribed by no locality and re-stricted to no creed, but read in every part of the earth, and permanent as the word's best literature. Dinah Moreis, the real Linah, departed hence in 1849, but the Dinah Morris of action sing on the pleads with the souls of men, litts their thoughts here envard, moistens their eyes with tents, gladdens their hearts with song, and inspires them with mity and hope for the fallen.

What was it, any I ask, that made her the mighty woman she became. It was not offy birth, superior education, native games, for challed position. In the education, harve grams for charded position. In the great cathedral church of Troubly m, Norway, there is a sculpture which hole a connectible history. When the building had been covered in, an aged artist came and asked to be alloyed to carve one of the blocks left for that purpose. Because of the years his request was declined but he begged to bird, and he was an artist, that eventually the chief ar intect allotted him a block in a remote part of the root where, in that high lati-tude, the sur can only strike upon it during six weeks in the mide of the post. in the mide of summer In those weeks, however, artists from many local- may be seen copying the work he wrought. Through the one man accepted his task, climber slowly up to his scatton each morning, and retired early each of the norm. One day he did not come tion as usual, and was found to be doad, with open eyes texed on a face he had do selled in the stone. It was the face of a woman a woman he had laved in early life. She had loved him, but death had shatched her away, and he had cherisher the fond image all these



GEORGE GREEN, OF WATERHOUSES. A carpenter and builder, grandson of George Evans (Thias Bede.)

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years. He knew himself to be a dying man, he knew also that his art would be buried with him in the grave, he was therefore resolved that the last work of his hand should be to carve the features of the woman so dear to his heart in speaking stone. When the attention of the chief architect had been called to the circumstance he gathered the other artists around him and said : "Gentlemen, do you see that face? That is the finest piece of work in this cathedral, and it is the work of love."

That is, in one word, the power which gave us Dinah Morris. Her whole nature was possessed, refined and etherealised by divine love. She has become what she is now in the world simply by the power of love. What wonders would that same love work in us if only we were surrendered to its transforming power! Seth Bede had his sabbatic years, even as Dinah had, departing hence in the fulness of peace in 1858, just as Adam Bede was preparing to astonish the literary world. A saintlier soul than he, and a holier and happier pair than these two, I know not where to find. George Eliot has enriched the spiritual life of the race by her portrayal of these characters; and, as she was thankful to have written so true a book, so may all be thankful to have such fine treasure made over to us in its pages. Those who in any degree belong to the stock of the Bedes, may be thankful for their share in a family history which bears such fruit in its branches. The book is a vital and entrancing poem which shows how from lowly surroundings a light may shine forth which shall irradiate the world. The Bedes, originally were carpenters and builders, and some of their descendants still, even to the fifth generation, follow the same occupation. The photograph on page 254

gives a view of premises which were the property as well as the home of my grandmother, the sister of Adam and Seth Bede. In the house here represented, I heard, sixty years ago, many stories of Thias and



LEIGH HOUSE, WATERHOUSES.

Lisbeth Bede, Adam and Seth, with other members of the Evans family. For more than a century it has been the centre of a building trade, and is to this day occupied by a relative of mine, who is, like myself. a great-grandson of Thias Bede the carpenter. It is situated at Waterhouses, just over the Weaver Hills from Ellastone (Hayslope). The home of my youth, the happy, loving home of my father and mother, and to this day the home of my beloved brother is just across the turnpike road, and is pictured on the opposite page. With these views of scenes so near and dear to my heart, I close this series of articles on The True Story of Seth Bede and Dinah Morris.

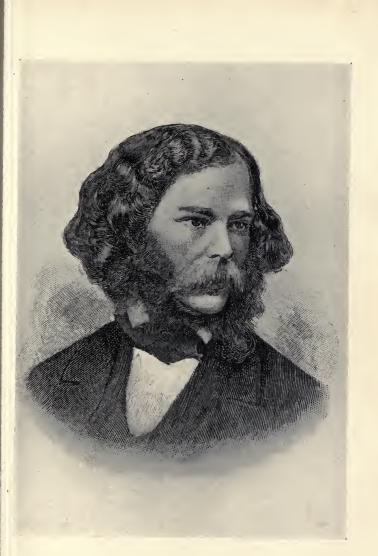
CHAPTER XV

THE MARRIAGE UNION OF GEORGE H. LEWES WITH MARY ANN EVANS (GEORGE ELIOT)

"Man, while he loves, is never quite depraved, And woman's triumph is a lover saved."—LAME.

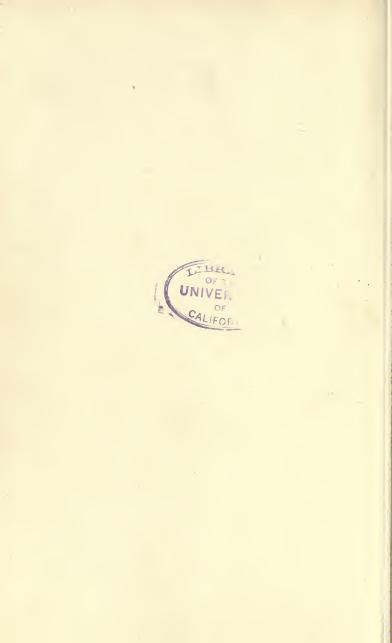
THE reputation of a great teacher is of importance to the whole community. George Eliot is surely one of In literature, for a generation, she has been a these. preacher of world-wide influence. In every one of her books she not only preaches to us in propria persona, but has also the faculty of making her characters preach. Take for example her story of Adam Bede, confessedly founded on family reminiscences. Here we make acquaintance with several characters who, in their way are very effective preachers. The hero of the book favours us with many a homily. In the workshop at Hayslope Adam preaches to his fellow-workmen of the dignity of labour. To Arthur Donnithorne he discourses on the need of a strong, firm will in the conduct of life, as contrasted with the moral dangers attendant on the flabby condition of moral see-saw :

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GEORGE HENRY LEWES.

Reproduced from an Engraving presented by Mr. G. H. Lewes to his friend, Robert Browning, now in the possession of Mr. G. J. Holyoake.



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"I've seen pretty clear, ever since I could cast up a sum, as you can never do what's wrong without breeding sin and trouble more than you can ever see. It's like a bit o' bad workmanship—you never see the end o' th' mischief it'll do. And it's a poor lookout to come into the world to make your fellow creatures worse off instead o' better."

This is only one of Adam's sensible manly sermons. Dinah Morris is another of the preachers. Her sermon preached on the green at Hayslope, setting forth the pitying compassion and tender love of God towards the sinful and the poor is one of the finest specimens of pleading pathos and yearning compassion to be found in literature. Mrs. Poyser is a preacher of another sort—quaint, droll, pungent, and severe—but a preacher all the same, whose homely talks, so full of merriment and wit are nevertheless charged with serious purpose and sparkle with gems of practical wisdom.

On every page she has written George Eliot shows herself a shrewd and searching preacher, whose audience is secure for ages and whose prelections have found their way into the leading languages of mankind. An impression is afloat that her popularity has waned. If this be so, how does it happen that twenty years after her decease, on the expiration of copyright in some of her books, new editions continue to issue from the press? How is it that everything concerning George Eliot's personality and her work is read with undiminished avidity? In August, 1902, there was issued a "George Eliot" number of The Bookman. In a comparatively few days the whole edition was sold out and many would-be purchasers failed to procure copies. In November of the same year, there appeared the first number of a very popular journal, T.P.'s Weekly. The paper came with a chorus of universal favour. No one seemed surprised that its first article should have been The Tragedy of George Eliot by T.P. himself. If the premises of the article had been unassailable its conclusions would have been irresistible. There is, however, as I venture to think, another side to the tragedy. T.P. was not to be wholly blamed if he did not see all of that other side. He had a biography of George Eliot before him, constructed for the most part out of her own diaries and letters, and upon these carefully edited documents he framed his own theory and drew his conclusions. All this is legitimate enough. The writer of George Eliot's biography, her surviving husband, Mr. J. W. Cross, was influenced by high and chivalrous motives in introducing with so much self-restraint his narrative of the union of George H. Lewes and George Eliot. Twenty-four years have now flown by since the lady died. Her books maintain a potent influence over the thoughts and lives of The teachers of religion study them and make men. quotations from them. Four separate biographies of the author, besides numerous biographic sketches, have been given to the world. Unnumbered essays on her teachings and her philosophy have appeared in reviews, newspapers, magazines. No author is more written about than George Eliot. And, withal, there remains the impression of tragedy in her life, of rebellion against the laws of society, and of a private life of sin altogether opposed to the teaching of her pen. From every point of view the case is serious. Here is a public teacher of universal fame and a dark shadow projecting itself on her memory, so that the eloquent T.P. sums up the matter thus :

"George Eliot's heart and George Eliot's life were in constant, though perhaps silent and unheard, conflict, that her message to the world is that her precept and not her example must be followed; in other words, her works are her penance and atonement."

This, however, is far from being all that must needs be stated. It has come to be a fashion in some quarters to set George Eliot in the pillory as proof of the moral blindness and spiritual obliquity which are consequent on disbelief in the inspiration and authority of holy scripture. I am myself a satisfied believer, but we need be sure that we are quite just in our judgment of those who, through intellectual difficulties, have rejected the faith which we hold dear. I have found as fine a sense of honour and as lofty a morality among some of these as are to be seen in the most strictly orthodox circles. In setting down the beliefs of Agnostics as a cause of immorality we should be supremely careful of our facts to begin with. In a periodical of two years ago I read a very confident article which held up George Eliot as a fearful warning of the tendency of unbelief to produce immoral life. Had the author known all the facts of the case I think he would have modified his harsh judgment. In the case of a more ambitious effort the same remarks apply. Two years after the appearance of The Life of George Eliot by her husband, the Rev. W. L. Watkinson wrote a volume entitled : The Influence of Scepticism on Character, in which George Eliot is exhibited as one of the dreadful examples. The following quotations will show the spirit and power of the attack :

"It was with this all important institution (marriage) that George Eliot trifled, and by consenting to live with a man whose wife was still alive she lent her vast influence to the lowering in the national mind of the sense of marital obligation which involves the happiness and dignity of millions."

"The two chosen representatives of the superior morality set aside truth for a lie, preferred their own will and pleasure to purity and justice, and exalted their lawless fancy above a palpable public duty, and lived together in adultery."

"This was the disgrace of her life and the condemnation of her philosophy."

"The wronged wife in the background always makes herself felt; the torn veil is on the floor no matter what gaieties may be going on, and one is conscious of a sickening sensation all through the history."

All this is scathing and severe. On the basis of the statements of George Eliot's biographers I am not sure that it is altogether unjust. Hence my feeling that the time has come for a freer and fuller statement than has vet been made public. The case is even more serious from another point of view. The Editor of the Review of Reviews told us, some years ago, that the selfish corrupters of female innocence were pleading the example of this great woman as an excuse for their own misdoings, and that women were discarding their marital obligations towards their husbands and their homes, excusing themselves for their unlawful connections, and calling it " living à la George Eliot." Thus, the matter becomes more and more urgent. All this was foreseen long years ago. One learned gentleman known to me for many years, a scholar of fine attainments, a man of lofty principles and pure morality, to whom all the parties and all the facts were intimately known, spoke to me on several occasions with hot indignation of what he deemed to be the mistaken policy of withholding the simple statement of the actual facts involved in the story. He judged that

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a deplorable injury to public morality had been the consequence of this error. The authority to whom I refer is the late Professor Francis W. Newman. His recollections were clear as crystal and his mind acute and penetrating. This gentleman as he became known to her stood exceedingly high in the esteem of George Eliot. At a very early period of her literary career she wrote of him thus :

"Thank you for a sight of our blessed St. Francis's letter. There is no imaginable moment in which the thought of such a being could be an intrusion. His soul is a blessed *yea*."

"He is a pure, noble being, and it is good only to look at such."

Professor Newman did not stand alone in the judgment I have chronicled. About the same time the *Christian World*, in a powerful and searching leader, said :

"There seems to be a kind of falsity in avoiding a discussion of what was one of the main and central facts of her existence."

"In the first place, one or two very important facts are undisputed; in the second place, the public have a right to press the relatives of George Eliot for further information."

"It is fair neither to the present nor to succeeding generations that an unsolved problem should be left to become insoluble. We are checked by the absence of evidence as to Mr. Lewes's relations with his wife. A divorce, we may safely take for granted, was not obtainable by him. But we do not know whether the conduct he had experienced from his wife had been insufferably cruel and outrageous, or whether she abandoned him without being ill-treated."

"Among the many guesses the public have been left to make

a frequent one has been that the real Mrs. Lewes was an incurable maniac."

"George Eliot preached the doctrine of renunciation—the doctrine of self-sacrifice—the doctrine of breaking the neck of inclination, though stiff as steel, under the foot of duty; but it was not given to her to give a transcendent example of this Christian virtue in her own life."

The paper, anonymously written, from which these extracts are taken is a fine example of what a leading article in a Christian weekly should be, and its positions are unassailable.

Our old friend *Truth*, in reviewing George Eliot's biography hit the mark by saying :

"The editor has been discreet to indiscretion, and by seeming to slip past it with averted face has led you to think the business worse than it was."

That is the exact position of affairs. Can the precious memory of George Eliot be cleared of any portion of the darkness of this dense cloud? I think it can. Let us see. We must imagine ourselves back in the forties, and must think of a fast set of young people living in the West End who maintain very close relations, are free in their manners, roystering in their conversation, jovial in their meetings, and bent on having a good time. There was among them a tendency to deride religion, to disregard the sanctity of the Sunday, and to make their Sunday a day of merriment. The prevailing spirit of the circle was Hedonism, they had voted themselves superior to the old ideals, and, both in ethics and philosophy, claimed to be a party of advanced thought. Let it be noted, however, that

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George Eliot was never one of this party. While it was indulging its audacious freedom she was safe within the close restraints of her old Warwickshire home. The break-up of this merry circle was inevitable from the first, and when it came it was sad enough, as described to me by Professor Newman. Two of its most prominent members were George H. Lewes and a bosom friend of his who shall be nameless here. In a general way this friend is spoken of with kindly memories apart from this sorrowful business by some who knew him well. Lewes and he were the closest of companions for years, co-workers in literature as well as intimate in social life. Both were married men and their young and beautiful wives were members of this advanced circle of social friends. One who frequently met with the party wrote of Mrs. Lewes as :

"Agnes, George Lewes's wife, that pretty rosebud-like woman."

Alas, it was discovered in course of time, that this fascinating creature had forsaken her husband, her home, and her three sons, to live apart under the protection of her husband's chosen friend. Friends intervened, the husband forgave her and she went back again. A second time she abandoned all for the more attractive company of her paramour. This time she made it clear that her separation was final, and that her marital treason had been long continued and very desperate. Doubtless such a denouement as this might be regarded as the natural consequence of the prevailing ideas and the free habits of this select circle. But, at least, our history shows that there was no injured woman in the background. She herself never entertained any grievance on that score. In after years she was amply provided for by the persons who are supposed to have injured her. In the exercise of her own inclinations she had chosen her position. It is manifest, therefore, that such an one could an injured person. have no claim as Tf anyone were injured it must have been the husband to whom she proved false, the boys whom she deprived of the blessed dower of a mother's love, and that other woman, her social companion and friend, with whose lawful husband she formed her illicit connection. It is somewhat strange that she outlived all the parties concerned. Against Lewes it is alleged that his ideas had been lax and his life Bohemian. Certainly, he was in mental rebellion against orthodox creeds and not over much in love with the prevailing social economy. But the conduct of his wife was most flagrant. What man is there among us who would not consider himself free of such a wife? What just law of God or man would hold a husband indissolubly bound to her? All this happened before George Eliot came upon the scene, indeed, before she had ever met with Lewes. When she did arrive she was a mature woman of thirty years of age. She had come to live in the Strand in the house of Dr. Chapman, editor of the Westminster Review. George Eliot was the assistant editor. George H. Lewes was one of the contributors, and was thus brought into contact with the sub-editor. Her first impressions of him were decidedly unfavourable. Then she discovered that under his flippant and jovial exterior there was serious purpose and moral earnestness. Mutual affection developed. Then came the ques-

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tion : Shall they marry? There was, however, the legal barrier of Lewes' former marriage. There was a strong and deep affection, but there could not be a legal union. Lewes proposed that they should be a law unto themselves and she at length consented. She first carefully considered whether in doing this thing she would be violating the rights of any sister woman, and concluded that no such charge could lie at her door. Under what forms then could the union desired by the parties be brought about? To such as hold that matrimony is one of the seven sacraments governed by canon law under the authority of a visible head of the church, there could be no marriage except by dispensation of His Holiness the Pope. But even they will allow that a considerable number of questionable alliances have obtained official sanction after this fashion. British authority had long since repudiated the canon law as interpreted by the Roman ecclesiastics, but had provided its own loophole, nevertheless. By this process very wealthy persons might find relief after long delay and at enormous cost. The man who wished to be released from an adulterous wife had first to establish a case of criminal conversation in the Court of Queen's Bench, he must then proceed to the Court of Arches to get his former marriage annulled, and finally he must go to the two Houses of Parliament to procure a special Act to enable him to marry again. By this time he would be a poorer man to the tune of several thousands of pounds. Neither the one nor the other of these methods of relief was open to Mr. Lewes and, indeed, the first could not have been available without the last. In any case he could not have found the money, and she was dependent on an

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annual income which did not more than suffice for her wants. One can easily imagine how the matter would be viewed by the wilful pair. A criticism by George Eliot, before she knew her future husband, affords some intimation that even at this early date her views on marriage were not altogether of the conventional order. She was writing her opinion of Jane Eyre in relation to Rochester and said :

"All self-sacrifice is good, but one would like it to be in a somewhat nobler cause than that of a diabolical law which chains a man soul and body to a putrefying carcass."

I am sure that both parties would agree that the law which still bound Lewes to his recreant wife and made divorce a luxury for very rich persons, was a law to be disobeyed. Be it remembered that at this time there was no Divorce Court in existence. Few persons were better acquainted with the New Testament than George Eliot. Hence, she would know that in the teaching of Christ as to the indissolubility of the marriage tie an exception is made in the case of "fornication." Most likely she would also know that so great an authority as John Milton, relying on his own independent research as well as upon the opinion of some of the most learned legal the fathers, regarded iurists and Christian Lord as being word employed by our of wider signification than is generally understood, including in its scope much more than sexual unfaithfulness. The ethics of Christ then most certainly did not disallow divorce in cases where there was fornication. In his recent discourses on the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Bishop of Birmingham, (Dr. Gore), admits that this is the teaching of Jesus,

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and even pleads for an alteration of the laws of the established church to bring them into harmony with that teaching. In the case before us fornication was known and avowed. It was flagrant in the extreme. And yet, such was the state of the law as to tie the husband to the unfaithful wife as long as life should last. Such law was oppressive, irrational and unjust. I am not arguing in favour of the course which was taken by this doting pair of human lovers. My point is that the precise circumstances should be stated. Then let the several schools of thought form their own judgment on the facts as they occurred. We have reached the point at which the lovers determined to blend their lives in wedded union. A lawful marriage is to them impossible, and with the full knowledge of the position they were about to assume they boldly faced the consequences and sent round intimations to their friends to the effect that they must henceforth be known as husband and wife. This was a painful sorrow to all her relations and a great consternation to her literary and social friends. There was speedily a journey to the Continent of Europe, and whether a form of marriage was gone through there as I have heard asserted by one very near to George Eliot and much beloved by her, or not, the union was in this country entirely wanting in legal sanction.

I know that one of George Eliot's biographers declares in plain terms that no such marriage ceremony took place. I am not prepared with evidence to refute his testimony, but will, nevertheless, relate what happened to me in November, 1904. I was driven to a charming home in Cornwall where there was made to me a communication of more than ordinary interest

and one that I least expected. The presence of a numerous supply of choice books indicated literary tastes, and my intercourse with the lady of the house revealed on her part fine conversational powers and high mental culture. She informed me that she was cousin to Mrs. Cash, of Coventry, the friend and pupil of George Eliot; that she had often conversed with her cousin about George Eliot; and especially concerning the marriage with George H. Lewes; that she had repeatedly heard Mrs. Cash declare that George Eliot had told her more than once that the legality of her marriage with Mr. Lewes was purely a matter of geography, that while it was illegal in England it was legal in Germany where a marriage ceremony had actually been performed. Even if such a ceremony did take place abroad it was utterly wanting in the sanction of law at home.

For many grave reasons such a marriage at its best must be ever most undesirable. Doubtless. irregular unions of this sort are more or less perilous to society. To take up such a position must entail unhappy consequences. For a great teacher and profound genius like George Eliot to have done this was, to say the least, unfortunate. One can never cease to deplore it both for her own sake and in the interests of society at large. A considerable share of the blame, however, must attach to the defective state of There is not a line to be cuoted from the laws. either of the parties to show that the conscience of either of them was for one moment uneasy with regard to their union. On the contrary, there is ample proof that she always considered it one of the chief blessings that had been given to her. The dedications to her several books, so expressive and sincere, are



GEORGE ELIOT.

From Sir Frederick W. Burton's Drawing (1865) in the National Portrait Gallery. Reproduced by kind permission of Henry B. Burton, Esq.

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unquestionably proof of that. After Mr. Lewes' decease the writer received from George Eliot a touching and plaintive letter showing how deeply she felt her bereavement. It was the great surging sorrow of her life. As for Lewes, it was impossible to be in his company without perceiving his adoring affection and honest pride in the rare woman who had conferred on him and his sons the great blessedness of being a true wife to him and gentle mother to them. Her chief biographer tells us that this irregular union of hers must be judged by its results. Following this rule we may fearlessly assert that to all the parties concerned the issues were exceptionally happy. The husband found a true help-meet in his wife, while she ever considered his tender and watchful love one of her chiefest blessings; the sons obtained an affectionate, solicitous and helpful mother, who made their domestic happiness and their promotion in life one of her chief concerns. I have read most enthusiastic expressions of their gratitude.

One of these was given in the "Times" not very long ago. A lady friend of the late Mr. Charles Lewes, the eldest son of Mr. G. H. Lewes, reports a conversation she had with Mr. Charles Lewes only a very little while prior to his lamented decease in Egypt. She made bold to ask whether it was true that G. H. Lewes left his family owing to the influence of George Eliot? "It is a wicked falsehood" was his answer. "My mother had left my father before he and George Eliot had ever met each other. George Eliot found a ruined life and she made it into a beautiful life. She found us poor little motherless boys, and what she did for us no one on earth will ever know. I am the son of the woman whom people say was wronged by George Eliot. I have told you the real truth of the matter and you have my authority to repeat it wherever and whenever such a statement is made in your presence."

With regard to Mr. G. H. Lewes it must be conceded that he fulfilled to perfection the duties of a fond and faithful husband. It was given to the devoted pair to dwell together in the gentle amenities of a mutually helpful union for nearly a quarter of a century. Nothing occurred to mar the happiness they enjoyed in each other's society till death rent them in twain. There can be no doubt that George H. Lewes was the very person to nurture and encourage the literary genius of George Eliot. 'It was he who most thoroughly appreciated her miscellaneous writings and divined the secret, undiscovered by herself, that she possessed a capacity for the highest fiction. George Henry Lewes discovered George Eliot. It was his admiring and imperative saying "You must try and write a story" that started her on her great career in the world of letters. He was himself a keen and facile critic. He had for her literary talent the most exalted admiration, and she reposed in his judgment the serenest confidence. She was diffident, and often despaired of her own powers to accomplish anything. She needed someone who could appreciate her great gifts, and on whom she could implicitly lean. Years earlier she had written of her "ivy-like instincts." Hence the world is very much indebted to G. H. Lewes for the long series of books which bear the name of George Eliot. It was he who set her forward in the track in which she won such brilliant fame, and as far as we are able to judge it appears to be probable that but for the encouragement which he so lovingly contributed, her great

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career would have been impossible to her. On the other hand, the effect of his union with George Eliot has been spoken of as the redemption of George H. Lewes. There is truth in that statement. Irregular as the union confessedly was, and therefore in an important sense to be deplored, yet considering its results it is not too much to say :

"'Twas so decreed, 'twas part of Nature's plan,

And all in vain we strive her works to scan;

Each soul had found its true affinity.

She was his woman named, he pre-ordained her man."

George Eliot's ideal, as expressed in her own choice words, was realised for a quarter of a century, in her marriage union with Geo. H. Lewes :

"What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined for life to strengthen each other in all labour, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting."

Even so was it in the marriage in question.

But I pause. My role is not that of the advocate, but that of an honest narrator of facts. Professor Newman's earnest voice still sounds in my ears. I feel the force of his judgment that the plain facts should be narrated. I have hoped that others would discharge this duty, and so fulfil the purpose my social leader and friend, Professor Newman, deemed to be so necessary. For me the shadows of the day are swiftly lengthening, and I feel a marked satisfaction in putting upon record this statement of a most important history. I fondly hope that it may place in a clearer light facts which have produced a most pain-

ful impression on many serious minds and that it will be a relief to thousands of the sincere admirers of a great writer. It is a service I am thankful to have done before the day has sunk too low.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RELIGION OF GEORGE ELIOT

"I have a life with Christ to live, But ere I live it, must I wait

Till learning can clear answer give Of this and that book's date?

I have a life in Christ to live,

I have a death in Christ to die; But must 1 wait till science give

All doubts a full reply? No, rather while the sea of doubt Is raging wildly round about. Questioning of life and death and sin, Let me but creep within Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet, Take but the lowest seat, And hear Thy awful voice repeat, In gentlest accents, heavenly sweet, 'Come unto Me and rest;

Believe 'Me, and be blest.' "

PROFESSOR SHARP.

OUR Scotch divine has here expressed for us the true attitude of faith in relation to the dark questionings and the searching criticisms of modern unbelief. The poem is too lengthy for a motto, but it harmonises so completely with my own inner feeling that I cannot resist the temptation of placing it at the head of the present chapter. For myself, I rest in the clear vision of a satisfied, adoring faith. There was a period when I tumbled for a while in a sea of doubt.

That, however, is long ago. I have now a realm of inner consciousness, all my own, in which certainty abides with me, and voices from unseen spheres are melodious in my ears. I introduce this confession of restful, hallowing faith because I have much to say of doubt and unbelief, in this chapter, and would first make my own position clear. It is that of a single-minded believer whose soul is filled with rapturous joy, and whose whole life is musical with praise. All the more do I sympathise with such as have never known, or any who have unfortunately lost, the firm anchorage of a steadfast faith. Unfortunately, did I say? I deem it unfortunate, indeed. to be bereft of the adoring heaven of faith. To me, a life without faith appears to be a life maimed and incomplete. I cannot but lament its absence in any human creature as a deprivation and a misfortune. I cannot but deplore much that happened in the religious history of George Eliot. My first intelligence of her was with regard to her religious rebellion against the creed of her beloved father.

Residing in Staffordshire, back in the forties, Warwickshire was, to us, a region far away. There we knew that our relative, the original of Adam Bede, resided in prosperity and comfort. We knew that he was a person valued for his worth and highly esteemed by a circle of aristocratic landowners, who profited by his services. Occasionally we saw him in Staffordshire, for there were funerals of our mutual relatives at Ellastone and Waterhouses, and there were other occasions when he came as a visitcr to the scenes of his early life. We knew that he was now residing in the neighbourhood of Coventry in semi-retirement, and that his youngest

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daughter (George Eliot) was keeping house for him All at once we were shocked to learn that the there. daughter had turned rebel to her father's religion, and we deemed this a daring and revolting deed. We regarded him as an exceptional man. To us he was a model of uprightness, devoutness, capacity and suc-"My brother Robert" was a phrase process. nounced by my grandmother with the largest satisfaction and with fond sisterly pride. "Uncle Robert" was a title of honour with my own dear mother, who was named after his eldest daughter. And to learn that his youngest daughter, Mary Ann, not yet known as George Eliot, had renounced her father's religion, had refused any longer to accompany him to church, and was altogether in a state of mental rebellion against his faith, did not exalt that young lady in our esteem. We could do no other than think of her as an undutiful child, who, in her religious revolt, had shown both folly and ingratitude. "Infidel" was a name of blackest omen to us up there, and the term "Unitarian," which I then for the first time heard, was only one shade less objectionable. My mother's horror of infidel books I can never forget. To us it was unaccountable, on any rational considerations, that the daughter of Adam Bede should have assumed the character of an unbeliever, and should have quarrelled with and separated from so good a father on the grounds of religious faith. We knew that the dispute had been outwardly healed, that she had resumed her attendances at church out of deference to her father's desire, but we could do no other than think of the future George Eliot as a person whose declension from right ways was to be mourned over, and whose delinquency was of an aggravated kind. This would be

about sixty years ago. Of course, in our insular narrowness, our views as to the heinous conduct of our relative were grossly exaggerated, but not more incorrect than some opinions about her which are current to-day. In the *Strand Magazine* for 1903, there is an article entitled : "Three-score Years and Ten." It purports to be a conversation between an aged member of an old English family and his grandson, the heir to his title and estates. The old gentleman is instructing his successor on the state of things in England when he was a young man.

"Not that the peerage is immaculate to-day. Only that the nobility flaunted their vice, whereas now they discreetly conceal it among their own set."

"What has caused the difference, grandfather?"

"Women, my boy. The women of my young days were sweet, good and alluring. But they were not well educated. They could be protected and pampered, or be ill-treated and neglected. But they were never on an equal footing with men. Much of the emancipation was due to the Queen, a good deal to George Eliot, who wrote in reprobation of what she had herself done—a thing you will hear of later in life."

The words I have placed in italics represent opinions of George Eliot which largely prevail. These criticisms are not altogether of a recent date. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1887, Mr. Ferrars Fenton writes of George Eliot as a "backslider" who was a source of pain and shame to her family "It struck me," says this writer, "that she wrote out of the anguish of her secret heart, at the impossibility of ever undoing the wrong to her mind, soul and honour, her self-will and strong passions had plunged her into. She seems to have been always looking back on the pure life of the village with a longing re-



TOMB OF GEORGE ELIOT'S BROTHER, ISAAC EVANS, CHILVERS COTON CHURCHYARD (Tom Tulliver of The Mill on the Floss.)



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morse and despair such as Eve might have looked back with to the Eden she had quitted, and to which she knew there was no return."

In like manner, the first article in T.P.'s Weekly was a slashing and sensational leader by T.P. himself. in which he boldly asserted that George Eliot's works are to be accepted from her as a penance and atonement for her breach of morality and law. In the Strand she is said to have written in reprobation of what she herself had done. This is a charge of grave inconsistency if not of downright hypocrisy. I have no hesitation in saying that all such conclusions are as wide as possible from the mark. There is nothing, I am sure, that George Eliot would more earnestly have deprecated than that suspicions like these should attach to her name, or that deductions so compromising should be drawn from her writings, both alike injurious to the cause of morality and religion. All through life she was a reverent and deeply religious soul, in spite of her agnosticism. To charge her with conscious and wilful immorality is an outrage. To profess to do her honour by insinuating that her conduct and her teachings were at variance is to degrade her memory. No more conscientious woman ever lived. In the preceding chapter I have set down the facts as to her marriage relation with George H. Lewes. It is on this union that the unfavourable judgments passed upon her are wholly based. With the knowledge of this in his mind, a learned canon of the Established Church denounced George Eliot, in my hearing, as an immoral and abandoned woman. And yet, in reality, there was no act of George Eliot's life which she regarded as more truly moral and upright than this

union. In it she accepted the responsibilities of a true wife and a vicarious mother, and all the parties concerned most gratefully testified that she fulfilled such duties to perfection. . The husband's pride in her and devotion to her were beautiful to behold. His son, after her decease, defended her against every aspersion, and blessed her memory. It is quite time that the severe moral judgments I have complained of should be revised. Surely the day is coming when such harsh condemnations and groundless speculations and guesses should for ever cease. In every respect they are unwarrantable, and therefore injurious. In relation to her first marriage union, whether it were right or wrong in the judgment of others, the conscience of George Eliot held both herself and her husband entirely blameless.

In outlining the religious life of this great woman, it is important to dwell upon the spiritual influences of her childhood. Naturally one looks first at her home and family. The father was a devout churchman, and we learn that he was one of those thorough-going Conformists who accepted the Church as the true and proper expression of the nation's religious life. He saw no need for questionings or doubts. His brother Seth Bede tells us in his memoirs that Adam was, even in early years, a high churchman. Of course, this designation had altogether a different meaning prior to the Tractarian movement. In this case it meant no more than such an attachment to the Established Church as shut out any kind of leanings to any other communion, accepted the church system as authoritative and divine. His daughter tells us that Adam Bede, her father, thought but little of such persons as did not agree with him in this respect. Here you



ASTLEY CASTLE AND MOAT; ASTLEY, NUNEATON. Astley is the Knebly of Scenes from Clerical Life.



THE REGION OF GEORGE ELIOT

have the picture of a good man with a rigid ecclesiastical system, and a set of ideas wholly lacking in elasticity and breadth. If anyone will consider the revelations in "The Mill on the Floss" concerning the Dodson family, he will see how the religious feelings on the mother's side harmonised with those of the father.

"The religion of the Dodsons consisted in revering whatever was customary and respectable; it was necessary to be baptised, else one could not be buried in the churchyard, and to take the sacrament before death as a security against more dimly understood perils; but it was of actual necessity to have the proper pall-bearers and well-cured hams at one's funeral, and to leave an unimpeachable will."

There can be no doubt that, by the Dodson's, George Eliot intended her mother's family. It may be an insoluble mystery why such a mind as that of George Eliot should issue from such a parent stock, but being there, one might conclude that it would not for long be bound within the cramped confines of the religious life of the home. Schools had also a very potent religious influence on the mind of George Eliot. In the one she attended at Nuneaton, one of the teachers, Miss Lewis, was a very devout Christian woman to whom her pupil became deeply attached. She was an evangelical churchwoman. The teaching at the parish church was also evangelical, with a decided Calvinistic tendency. At this early age there came a definite religious experience and a full acceptance of the Calvinistic system. The change to the Misses Franklin's school at Coventry only accentuated these influences. Here she became a leader in exercises of religion among the girls. Influenced by religious ideas she became a parish worker on leaving

school, and was in every way a model of Christian life and activity up to the time of becoming a resident in Coventry in 1841, when she had attained the 'age of twenty-one years. Her life was lived apart. This she strongly felt at this time, and expressed herself thus:

"I have no one who enters into my pleasures, or my griefs; no one with whom I can pour out my soul; no one with the same yearnings, the same temptations, the same delights as myself."

How her mind evolved the social question on its religious side we may see by another extract :

"The prevalence of misery and want in this boasted nation of prosperity and glory is appalling, and really seems to call us away from mental luxury. O, to be doing some little towards the regeneration of this groaning, travailing creation! I am supine and stupid—overfed with favors—while the haggard looks and piercing glance of want and conscious hopelessness are to be seen in the streets."

One other extract will show the depth and intensity of George Eliot's spiritual life at this time. It was written concerning her engagement in household duties, just prior to the break-up of the dear old home at Griff :

"I have had much of this kind of occupation lately, and I grieve to say I have not gone through it so cheerfully as the character of a Christian, who professes to do all, even the most trifling, duty, as the Lord demands."

The Christian ideal here is very high, the introspection and consequent self-judgment are searching and severe. Two things stand out at this period. A low state of physical health recalling the chills of the Attleborough boarding-school, and a constant com-

plaint of her low attainments in the Christian calling. In these quotations we may see the ground prepared and ready for that kind of development which came with such amazing rapidity after the removal to Coventry? Miss Sibree, a daughter of the late Rev. John Sibree, a well-known Congregational minister at Coventry, a pupil, and one of her correspondents, gives another glance at the inner life of George Eliot at this time. This shows that her view of the claims of evangelical piety compelling her, she at one time sacrificed the cultivation of her intellect and even relinquished a proper regard to personal appearance. "I used to go about like an owl, to the great disgust of my brother, and I would have denied him what I now see to have been quite lawful amusements." Do we not see here a young soul strung up to too high a pitch? She had her sincere speculations too. She was earnestly bent "to shape this anomalous English Christian life of ours into some consistency with the spirit and simple verbal tenor of the New Testament." The piety of George Eliot up to 1842 was deeply genuine, without a doubt it was intensely practical and all engrossing, but it may be questioned whether it was natural and healthy. Very rapidly the change Being introduced into friendship with a very came. intellectual circle in Coventry, whose freedom in religious thought was linked to great personal attractiveness and moral goodness, she began to read and study a book written by one of the circle entitled : "An enquiry concerning the origin of Christianity." In this book the author entirely rejects the supernatural and miraculous origin of the religion of Christ, and accounts for it on other grounds. The book brought with it an instantaneous revolution. From the de-

vout believer, George Eliot at one great bound swung round to the position of an agnostic. But it was against Calvinistic dogma that she revolted. She said :

"Calvinism is Christianity, and that granted, it is a religion of pure selfishness."

There are few Christian teachers to-day who would allow that "Calvinism is Christianity." Even if it were so, however, the history of religion in Europe the last three hundred years would show that the Calvinian creed has done great things and has produced much that does not square with "pure selfishness." But the die was cast, and George Eliot never regained her faith. In the change, however, from Calvinism and evangelicalism to doubt she was perfectly honest and sincere. Nor when she had ceased to hold the Christian faith did she cease to be religious. Is there no such thing as a practical adherence to the spiritual life apart from intellectual dogmas? Is there no going forth of the light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world beyond the circle of the professed adherents of the church of the Saviour? Very few enlightened believers in these days would answer these questions in the negative. Even in the bosom of the Church of Christ itself there has been a silent revolution. The old Calvinism is all but gone. In the case of the fine old Independent minister portrayed in Felix Holt, it was already relaxing its grip. The Rev. Rufus Lyon, we are told, theological as he was, and given to "sectarian phraseology," and, moreover, an "old-fashioned Puritan," had nevertheless felt the broadening process. He savs :

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"I would not wantonly grasp at ease of mind through an arbitrary choice of doctrine, yet, I cannot but believe that the merits of the Divine Sacrifice are wider than our utmost charity. I once believed otherwise—but not now, not now."

The congregation in the chapel yard at Treby Magna had given signs of some uneasiness on account of this broadening of the minister's doctrinal views, a fact which indicates a tolerably wide movement that has travelled far since the days of Rufus Lyon. How well I remember a recital to me by a popular Baptist minister some forty-five years ago. He was a prolific author as well as a powerful preacher. He told us how that he had been the minister, in his earliest pastorate, of a strict communion Baptist church, that he had even believed in the reprobation of little children, and had preached that horrible doctrine from the pulpit as a part of the divine revelation. Then, his own little boy of eight years of age lay dead before his eyes. Now the love of the father's heart came into conflict with the rigorous logic of the preacher's inhuman creed. When he came to contemplate the possibility of the eternal reprobation of his own dead child, his whole nature rebelled against such doctrine and he was comforted. Naturally, his preaching was modified, and his congregation took alarm, as did that of Rufus Lyon. This led to a separation, to services for awhile in the town hall, then to the erection of the largest Nonconformist church in the district, which is, to this day, a centre of vigorous life and energy.

I cannot but think that warped and narrow ecclesiastical and doctrinal views, which are in themselves no necessary part of the Christian system, have far too often been an occasion of stumbling, and have

hastened the revolt to unbelief of an order of minds which were naturally of a superior cast, and only longed for a larger intellectual freedom. Many of us remember both as advocate and judge, the late silvertongued Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. - He tells us that he once confessed to the saintly John Keble that he was sorely perplexed on the question of Inspiration. The answer he received was that "most of the men who had difficulties on that subject were too wicked to be reasoned with." I do not think that any dogmatic utterance could be farther from the truth or more unfortunate. Who is there among us, having known any large number of persons inclined to agnosticism. who has not found with them a lofty sense of honour, strict regard and sacred homage for truth, combined with a life upright and altruistic? Perchance it may be that the shortcomings of Christians. their palpable worldliness and inconsistency have alienated many upright minds from the Christian faith. At the great mission to the working classes carried on some forty years in the Lambeth Baths, I used to meet with many of the most influential secularists and socialists of the day. The oft-repeated argument against Christianity was not against the morality, the ethics. or even the divine authority of Jesus. but against the faulty morality, the low ideals, the worldly-mindedness, the injustice and selfish rapacity of many professing Christians. One had to say that even the best of us were but imperfect Christians. Just as some natives have said to Englishmen abroad, having first read our Bible : "You are not according to your book," so, alas, with many of us, striving to be like our Lord, we fall lamentably short of our ideal. How often has this been a cause of stumbling. Statements

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by Froude and Lecky prove that a too confident dogmatism makes sceptics, as in the case of the Oxford movement. The leaders virtually demanded : "Believe this or nothing." Many courageous minds, we are told, took them instantly at their word, and became unbelievers. I think that rampant superstition and lifeless orthodoxy are accountable for much unbelief, while the modern tendency to materialism and pessimism operate in the same direction. Whatever the causes might have been which brought about the loss of faith in the case of George Eliot, its bright and holy joy was never recovered. Thirty eight years followed, years of strenuous literary labour and high philosophic thought, but with no return of faith in the true and proper sense of the word. I cannot but regard this as a great calamity to herself, and to the world at large. But in her darkest hour of unbelief I am of opinion that George Eliot was much more Christian than she knew, and that the influence of her past Christian experience was never entirely lost. There is a luminous passage on this point in the British Weekly of June 5th, 1902. The able writer says :

"When George Eliot appeared as a novelist, the multitudes of her readers perceived at once that she knew the secrets of the Spiritual life. No one can get up Christianity so as to deceive a Christian. Theology, of course, may be got up. But the religion of the heart cannot be feigned. This is the great peculiarity of George Eliot's position. . . . The fact that she had passed through the Christian experience, and maintained throughout her life a grave and reverent regard for it, powerfully contributed to her popularity and her influence. . . So far as her writings go, she appears to accept in full the ethics of Christianity. Perhaps the most important passage in her letters bearing on this point is the following: 'My soul heartily responds to your rejoicing that society is attaining a

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more perfect idea and exhibition of Paul's exhortation: Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. I believe the amen to this will be uttered more and more fervently among all posterities for evermore.""

It is thus both instructive and gratifying to note the attitude she assumed towards religion. It is really a most interesting study. In the works of George Eliot which remain as an active and abiding force in the world's literary thought, who ever found a sentence written in antagonism to religion? Too well she knew what the loss of faith entailed. Her own sayings are her witness here. Mr. John Morley, M.P., in an article in *Macmillan's Magazine*, says that after her revolt from the creeds of her youth and before she was thirty years old, her religious and moral sympathy with the historical life of man had become the new seed of a positive faith and a semi-conservative creed. This assertion is borne out by several declarations of George Eliot herself. Take the following :

"Pray don't ask me ever again not to rob a man of his religious belief, as if you thought my mind tended to such robbery. I have too profound a conviction of the efficacy that lies in all sincere faith, and the spiritual blight that comes with no faith, to have any negative propagandism in me. In fact, I have very little sympathy with Freethinkers as a class, and have lost all interest in mere antagonism to religious doctrines. I care only to know, if possible, the last meaning that lies in all religious doctrines from the beginning till now."

This is not the attitude of a blatant and aggressive unbeliever, but the expression of a truly reverent soul. Even as early as 1859, writing to her Genevan friend M. D'Albert, she states that she had abandoned the old spirit of antagonism which had possessed her ten years before. She now sympathises with any faith

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in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves. She thinks, too, that Christianity is the highest expression of religious sentiment that has yet found its place in the history of mankind, and has the profoundest interest in the inward life of sincere Christians in all ages.

And yet we are not to think of her as anything but an unbeliever. We cannot but remember with keen interest and mental pain that despairing utterance revealed to us by the late Mr. F. W. H. Myers in the *Century Magazine* of November, 1881. I present it in the author's own words :

"I remember how, at Cambridge, I walked with her once in the Fellows' Garden of Trinity, on an evening of rainy May; and she, stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet calls of men-the words God, Immortality, Duty-pronounced with terrible earnestness how inconceivable was the first, how unbelievable the second, and yet how imperative and absolute the third. Never, perhaps, have sterner accents affirmed the sovereignty of impersonal and unrecompensing Law. I listened, and night fell; her grave, majestic countenance turned to me like a sibyl's in the gloom; it was as though she withdrew from my grasp one by one the two scrolls of promise and left me the third scroll only, awful with inevitable fates. And when we stood at length and parted, amid that columnar circuit of the forest trees, beneath the last twilight of starless skies, I seemed to be gazing like Titus at Jerusalem on vacant seats and empty halls-on a sanctuary with no presence to hallow it, and heaven left lonely of a God."

For such a state of mind I have my own simile. I have often visited that weird yet lovely ruin, the picturesque Tintern Abbey. Awed by its fallen grandeur I have thought of it roofed and pinnacled

and filled with crowds of eager worshippers. I have heard the organ pealing among the now silent arches. and earth answering to heaven in strains of music and song. The soul bereft of faith is like the dismantled abbey. Its songs of triumph have ceased. Its strains of music are stilled, the harp hangs silent on the willows, and the sacred minstrelsy sounds no more. Hope has fled and gloom and despondency have usurped its Indeed, if I am not mistaken, George Eliot place. had a tendency to a low state of physical health from her childhood onward, and to more or less mental despondency, so much so that I should not wonder if there were some subtle connection between these things and her sombre unbelief. But, while her friend, Mr. F. W. H. Myers, lifts the veil that we may see how far the heaven of the soul had become clouded over with doubt, he also helps us to understand how it is that this dismal unbelief does not shut out the possibility of another form of religious life which is very real and very potent, though wanting in joyous faith. Later in life, through the influence of psychological investigation, Mr. Myers came to a very definite belief in an unseen world of living realities and says : "If it had not been for this, in a hundred years no one would have believed in the spiritual realm at all. But because of it, and as the result of it, in twentyfive years no reputable man of science will question the fact of the resurrection of Jesus." Had George Eliot lived a few years longer, perhaps she also might have seen re-erected for her the stately temple of faith.

So far, however, as one can see, the words of Zangwill express her attitude to the last, on the side of the intellect, at least :

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"The nymphs are gone, the fairies flown, The olden presence is unknown, The ancient gods for ever fled, The stars are silent overhead; The music of the spheres is still, The night is dark, the wind is chill; The later gods have followed Pan; And man is left alone with man."

Can there be a religion, then? Yes, says Mr. Myers, and this is the religion of George Eliot. He shall describe it for us. She lacked, he says, "some aroma of hope, some felicity of virtue," but, nevertheless she worked out practically "The expansion of the sense of human fellowship into an influence strong enough to compel us to live for others, even though it be beneath the on-coming shadow of an endless night." The urgent and obvious motives of welldoing with her were "our love and pity for our fellowmen." One might naturally ask where do these high qualities find such full and beneficent flow as in the life of Jesus of Nazareth? But though faith be not there, there is religion, beautiful and blessed, and while not the highest, yet influenced by the Christ more than she knew.

There is a little book written under very pathetic circumstances, as its author was consciously slipping down to death while he wrote it, which helps us to gauge the religious message of George Eliot's works. This book received the imprimatur of the great author's approval, as no other criticism of her works had done. Its theory received her own endorsement. The author had penetrated her secret. The principle which he lays down is this:

"That the highest life of man only begins when he begins to accept and to bear the Cross; and that the conscious pursuit

of happiness as his highest aim tends inevitably to enslave him. Even those who read novels more thoughtfully may be startled to find George Eliot put forward as the representative of this higher-toned fiction with which she has laboured to set before us the Christian and therefore the only exhaustively true ideal of life."

"Yet, from the first," says our author, " this thought and the specific purpose of this teaching have never been absent from the writer's mind ; that it may be defined as the central aim of all her works: and that it gathers in force, condensation, and power throughout the series." The writer then traces his central idea through all George Eliot's works, and finds it variously illustrated in every one of them. Herein is a singular compensation for the surrender of faith. This explains why George Eliot's name is so often heard, and worthily so, in so many of our Christian pulpits. In this way, rejecting the theories of inspiration for herself, she has become an inspired teacher to others. The beautiful divining of this deceased writer has given me a new light on much of George Eliot's work. and exhibits an infinitely nobler purpose than the penance and atonement theory of "T.P."

It is interesting now to remember that that truly wonderful mediæval book, the *Imitation of Christ* was, along with the Scriptures, her life-long companion. In the portrait of Maggie Tulliver, which George Eliot allows grew out of her own early life there is an account of how Bob Jakins brings to Maggie a collection of books for her entertainment in trouble, and the *Imitation* is one of them. Some searching quotations are given, and we are allowed to see what a hold this singular book obtained on the soul of the enquiring Maggie. Even so was it with George Eliot herself,

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and it is not without interest to know, on the testimony of Mr. F. W. H. Myers, that when she lay dead. on the little table beside her bed there was found the familiar volume The Imitation of Christ, the last book her eyes had glanced upon. Not long prior to his decease the first husband, finding his wife poring over her small-print Bible, bought for her daily use, to relieve her failing vision, a volume of the Scriptures with larger print. The second husband lets us see how she loved her Bible to the end. He tells us that each day after breakfast it was their custom to read it together, and enlightens us on the organ tones of her voice as she audibly rendered chapters from the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, which were portions specially favoured, together with the epistles of St. Paul. In spite of her unrelieved agnosticism, George Eliot was a better practical Christian than many of us who have never known the night of doubt at all. How can I do better than quote here a poem taken from Harper's Magazine, entitled "George Eliot. Her Jury."

GEORGE ELIOT.

HER JURY.

A LILY rooted in a sacred soil, Arrayed with those who neither spin nor toil; Dinah, the preacher, through the purple air, Forever in her gentle evening prayer Shall plead for Her—what ear too deaf to hear?— "As if she spoke to someone very near."

And he of storied Florence, whose great heart Broke for its human error; wrapped apart, And scorching in the swift, prophetic flame Of passion for late holiness, and shame

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Than untried glory grander, gladder, higher-Deathless, for Her, he "testifies by fire."

A statue fair and firm on marble feet, Womanhood's woman, Dorothea, sweet As strength, and strong as tenderness, to make A "struggle with the dark" for white light's sake, Immortal stands, unanswered speaks. Shall they, Of Her great hand the moulded, breathing clay, Her fit, select, and proud survivors be?— Possess the life eternal, and not She?

The latest intimation of the tenor of George Eliot's belief which has come to me is one that has not hitherto appeared in print. It pertains to the last few months of her life. To a dear relation, of whom she was justly proud, she said : "I wish I could believe as you believe." The question was asked : "What is the difficulty?" The answer followed : "Only the miraculous." How this brings to mind the pregnant saying of the sceptical King of Prussia, Frederick II. : "O, happy Zieten, how I wish I could believe it!" Surely, in such a state of mind, however unconquerable the intellectual difficulties may be, the individual is not far from the Kingdom of God.

And now, may I go back a moment to the poem by Principal Sharp? Is there anything in the dates of canonical books or the doubts unresolved by science to keep us from the life we are called to live in Christ, the work there is given us to do for Him and the death in Him we have to die? Verily, no. It is not much that doubt can do for us. Goethe is reported to have said to one who was always imparting his doubts : "If you are certain of anything tell it to me. I have doubts enough of my own." Both the church and the world want faith rather than doubt, and faith

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will always justify itself in the life and experience of truly intelligent souls. To them the voice from heaven will be a living experience, radiant with lasting peace :

> "Come unto Me and rest, Believe Me and be blest."



THE END

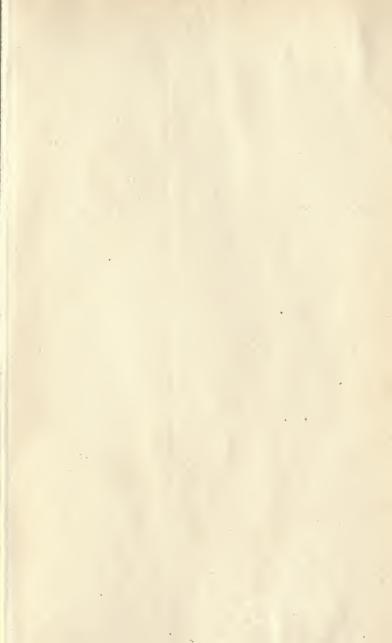
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